

Opening Statement
by the Secretary General of the OSCE, H.E. Ambassador Ján Kubiš,
at the
Thailand Conference
On “Sharing of Experiences in Combating Trafficking in Human Beings:
Opportunities for Cooperation”

Bangkok, June 16-17, 2005

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to participate at the inauguration of today's Thailand Conference On “Sharing of Experiences in Combating Trafficking in Human Beings: Opportunities for Cooperation”. I would like to convey my most sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Thailand for welcoming us and hosting this timely and important event. My special thanks go to representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy in Vienna, who have provided excellent co-operation, professional backing and assistance for the successful launching of this event.

Today's conference witnesses of the importance Thailand attaches to the issue of anti-trafficking and to its partnership with the OSCE. I recollect the first OSCE-Thailand Conference on the Human Dimension of Security, which was held in Bangkok on 20-21 June 2002. Then we discussed issues related to the OSCE's human dimension, including addressing the challenge to security from trafficking in human beings and its social and economic aspects. Some of the conclusions from the 2002 conference included a call for joint efforts at national, regional and especially international level as crucial factors to address the issue of trafficking in human beings. Participants at the conference also made a call for strengthening co-operation between the OSCE and Asia regions, in order to effectively address issues such as trafficking in human beings. I am therefore glad to see that we are here today to continue building on those discussions.

Dr. Konrad, the OSCE's Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, will provide a detailed and knowledgeable intervention on this subject, which I am sure will stimulate further discussion in the course of this conference. On my part, I would like to stress that trafficking in human beings is on top of the OSCE's agenda, as the appointment of Dr. Konrad, and the creation of an Anti-Trafficking Assistance Unit in the Secretariat prove, both following the adoption of an OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings.

Instead, I will make a few remarks on the state of our partnership, and share with participants a few thoughts on the way ahead, which are the fruit of my six-year experience as Secretary General of the OSCE.

Strengthening relations with the Asian Partners for Co-operation

The OSCE attaches special importance to relations with the Partners for Co-operation. Our dialogue has been evolving constantly over the years and I would like to summarize some of our most recent developments and describe how our relations have continued to strengthen.

First of all, we have recently added **new partners** to our dialogue. Mongolia was the fifth country from Asia to become OSCE's Partner for Co-operation in December 2005, when the Permanent Council adopted a decision stating that Mongolia had supported the OSCE principles and objectives and shared its comprehensive and co-operative approach to security. We welcome the fact that Mongolia, which shares common borders with the OSCE region, has expressed its interest in establishing close relations with our Organization. Building co-operation with our new Partner, including through the exchange of views and information on various issues of mutual interest and participation in OSCE meetings and activities, will be an important part of our joint work this year.

Over the years, we have also developed **new mechanisms** for our dialogue with Partner States. In Vienna, the meetings of the OSCE Asian Contact Group have convened since 2003 bringing together the participating and partner States. Two years on, these meetings have now become increasingly interactive. In addition, the Partner States are invited more regularly to meetings of the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation. These steps have certainly helped to enhance our dialogue.

As you know, last year we started to organize special side-events for Partner States during the OSCE Economic Forum and the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. This year, by a decision of the Permanent Council, for the first time a side-event is envisaged to take place with the Partner States during the third forthcoming meeting of the Annual Security Review Conference. Discussion will focus on promoting dialogue and co-operation between OSCE Partners and participating States in the politico-military dimension, assessment and possibilities for increased interaction and implementation. This side event will give an opportunity to reflect on how we could work more closely together on this subject.

Thirdly, we have been conducting **new activities**, all aimed at strengthening the Partner States' involvement in the work of the OSCE community. For example, last October, the OSCE has deployed for the first time an Election Support Team (EST) to assist a Partner State -- Afghanistan that had become a Partner for Co-operation of the OSCE in 2003. The EST deployment paid tribute to the importance of democratic elections for furthering stability and ensuring the sustainable development of Afghanistan. OSCE's engagement was widely welcomed as an important contribution to the overall international effort in Afghanistan. The Chairman-in-Office has now received an invitation for the OSCE to observe Afghanistan's parliamentary elections scheduled for September 2005, and we are looking into ways how the Organization can contribute best.

In March 2004, in Tokyo, at the second OSCE – Japan Conference, participants agreed that there were many OSCE activities that could serve as useful examples for Asia, as countries in the region considered steps to enhance preventive diplomacy. It was felt that there could be scope for collaboration and a common focus on the efforts undertaken by the OSCE and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in tackling transnational and non-traditional security challenges. As a step in that direction, the participants of the conference in Tokyo were invited to take part in an informal meeting with the participants of the ARF Workshop on Preventive Diplomacy, co-hosted by Japan and Thailand. The presence of ARF members in this conference in Bangkok bodes well for building further relations.

It was less than two months ago that the OSCE-Korea Conference on New Security Threats and a new Security Paradigm convened in Seoul. Last April's OSCE-Korea Conference also bears witness to the fact that the OSCE's experience gained in the comprehensive and co-operative approach to security continues to be relevant to other regions, including Asia. On the other hand, we at the OSCE pay close attention to the security situation and approaches in Northeast Asia. I

therefore note with interest the approach of the Republic of Korea, inter alia, through its 'Peace and Prosperity Policy' which is expected to consolidate peace on the Korean Peninsula, together with the international community.

The way forward

As a regional organization under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE, through its structures and institutions, remains distinctive in its ability to conduct political dialogue and promote close co-operation among its participating States on a daily basis. Developing dynamic dialogue and co-operation with Partner States is another distinctive and important feature of our Organization. It is also true that the OSCE's notion and practice of the comprehensive and co-operative approach to security, based on common values and mutually agreed norms and commitments, continue to be the best possible way for enhancing security and stability in the OSCE area and preventing and combating new security threats.

As new security threats are increasingly global in nature, there is a growing necessity to solve common problems together. As clearly stated in the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-first Century adopted in Maastricht in 2003, 'the OSCE will intensify its co-operation with its Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation, by early identification of areas of common interest and concern and possibilities for further co-ordinated action.'

The Ministerial Council meeting in Sofia held last December further recognized the increasing importance of the well-established co-operation and dialogue between the OSCE and its Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation. Indeed, partnerships too need to be constantly adapted to the evolving threats and challenges.

There is further potential for intensifying and enhancing our co-operation. This could be pursued through a deeper sharing of values. And that is why the OSCE participating States encourage Partner States to voluntarily implement OSCE norms, principles and commitments as a means to strengthen interaction with the OSCE. Enhanced and closer co-operation could also ensue through more joint work on preventing and combating new security threats, such as terrorism, trafficking in all its forms, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and intolerance and discrimination.

Jointly, we can further explore ways to build closer relations between the OSCE and regional organizations beyond the Organization's area. I attach particular importance to the follow-up to one of the main proposals arising from the recent OSCE-Korea conference, namely to strengthen relations between the OSCE and the ARF through, *inter alia*, possibly organizing a joint OSCE-ARF conference. I look forward to hearing the opinions of the ARF Member States in this respect.

Conclusion

By bearing in mind the specificity of each region, the OSCE and the Asian Partners for Co-operation must continue to build on our relations and move forward to new achievements. It is through continued dialogue and closer partnership that we can and will achieve success in dealing with new security threats. Together, we need to ensure that a new security paradigm is one of further co-operation and partnership.

Thank you for your attention.