



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Presence in Albania

HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS AT INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE "EXTREME NATURAL PHENOMENA AND SECURITY ISSUES"

31 May 2021

I am particularly honored to attend this conference, and I will try to make the best use of the three minutes time allotted to me. Very straight forwardly I will offer you 3 antithesis and a final point on the role of the OSCE.

1 - Predictability against surprise

I think we all agree that there are natural phenomena that are impossible to predict, despite all the laudable efforts of the scientific community. Earthquakes, with their tragic human lives toll, are a typical example par excellence.

On the other hand, if one looks back to the last 20 years, we count a number of epidemic outbreaks. SARS in China, MERS in the Arabian Peninsula, H1N1 flu in Mexico, Ebola in West Africa, Zika from the Pacific Islands. All different one from the other but with one thing in common: they all came as surprises, and they should not have.

Actually, we are cognizant that extreme natural phenomena, for instance those climate change related, exacerbate pandemics, worsens food and water shortages, increase the risks of pandemics, and aggravate mass displacement. Extreme weather disrupts public health infrastructure, service and trade. Extreme phenomena pose a threat to security.

2 – Plan against Planning

We have read number of times that plans are worthless, but planning is certainly everything. I humbly tend to believe that both are indispensable. Emergencies come often with a set of unknowns, eventually with a mismatch between what we expect and what will happen indeed. Still, even if the details of a plan do not match the unexpected reality, planning is a fundamental process. And here is the deep meaning of today's works.

In fact, already in 2005, Michael Osterholm predicted that "The arrival of a pandemic influenza would trigger a reaction that would change the world overnight", and pointed out to the need for a blueprint for how to get a population through one to three years of a pandemic. A plan that must involve all the key components of society, the full spectrum of the public sector together with the private one and the business community. Plan is indispensable, but let us keep in mind that resilience is a real key to crisis management.

3 – Me against We

This antithesis opens a Pandora box to some extent.

We could even rephrase it as Global challenges against local capacities, to remain in a diplomatic and rather nuanced terrain. Extreme natural events such as Covid have highlighted a gap between global problems and the capacity to meet them, which had an impact on the scale of the pandemic itself.

I believe in a strong case for multilateralism and global co-operation to tackle extreme natural phenomena, and this was exactly the main message that came out from the works of the Global Solutions Summit just a few days ago, with the idea (or hope) that “Multilateralism is bouncing back”.

4 – Why am I here today? Why the OSCE Presence in Albania?

I strongly believe in the benefit of multilateralism, as I said, and in closer international co-operation, and it is not by chance that I am serving in the OSCE, and proud to be serving here in Albania.

There is no need to list here all the concrete initiatives that the Presence in Albania has conducted and continues to conduct hand-in-hand with its Albanian interlocutors – central, local, state, non-state –since the beginning of the pandemic in the aftermath of the earthquake, starting with the Security Academy to end with the Parliament. Our engagement on the ground to strengthen resilience and security, to bring together a number of critical stakeholders in the field on environment, to address transnational threats, working together with a multi-level and multi-stakeholders approach.

As was highlighted also in a very recent security public opinion survey published by the Regional Cooperation Council, each of the threats and risks has a multidimensional character, requiring a holistic and co-ordinated approach rather than simplification and reductionism. And it is in this spirit that I commend the Security Academy and the organizers for this important event that serves as a platform to harvest best knowledge and experiences available in the field of civil emergencies, natural disasters and addressing related security issues. This exercise, with such a “parterre de roi” of speakers, contributes to reinforce trust in the institutions. And trust enters the national chain at every link when extreme natural phenomena are at stake. Please continue to count on us, on the OSCE Presence for the follow up to this exercise. I wish every success to this initiative.

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