ADDRESS

by Dr Dimitrij Rupel, OSCE Chairman-in-Office
at the OSCE-Korea Conference:
New Security Threats and a New Security Paradigm,
25-26 April 2005, Seoul

Deputy Minister,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to inaugurate the OSCE-Korea Conference. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the host country for the warm hospitality extended to us here in Seoul.

We are meeting in Seoul for the third time. This pays tribute to Korea's active role as a Partner for Co-operation, which has been evident from the outset when it became an Asian Partner in 1994.

As Chairman-in-Office, I value relations with the OSCE Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. Our regions are interdependent in many ways and therefore we must jointly safeguard our security. We believe that we have something to offer, but we also have our own interest in reaching out to other parts of the world. The OSCE region is not an island. In our inter-dependent world, what happens on one continent or in one sub-region can affect us all. We should therefore share expertise, or to use OSCE language, best practices to help build a safer world.

For example, the OSCE supported the Presidential elections in Afghanistan last year – our first activity "out of area" – and has been invited to do the same for parliamentary elections this year. I appeal to the OSCE States to accept this invitation. Last year we welcomed Mongolia as a new Partner. And at the beginning of this year we sent an assessment team to the Palestinian territories to see how the OSCE could be of assistance in elections work.

This proves that the path the OSCE has travelled with the Asian and Mediterranean Partners in the past is being followed in other regions.

As is demonstrated by the title of this Conference, we are faced with new security threats and live within a new security paradigm. These threats include economic, social, and political tensions, inter- and intra-state conflicts, terrorism, organized crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and environmental instability. International organisations are in the process of re-tooling themselves to better adapt to combating these challenges.

Due to the evolving and continuously changing nature of security challenges the OSCE must also re-tool itself and adapt to the new situation. To this end, the OSCE adopted – back in 2003 – the Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century and has been implementing it ever since. The strategy includes strengthening of our counter-terrorism capabilities, a new focus on trafficking and organized crime, enhancement of our policing work, high profile activities to combat discrimination and intolerance, and the development of a border management concept. Renewed emphasis is being placed on the OSCE political-military dimension, for example in small arms and light weapons and the security of surplus materials including ammunition stockpiles, where OSCE is taking concrete steps to provide appropriate help to participating States. We are also taking a more strategic approach to the economic and environmental aspects of security.

As mentioned, security environment changes constantly and so shall we. Therefore in addition to this very practical, operational work, I have appointed the Panel of Eminent Persons, which is to give a new impetus to political dialogue and provide strategic vision for the Organization in the twenty-first century; the Panel will also assess the extent to which the OSCE is suited for dealing with the challenges ahead.

The OSCE is an important part of the European security network. I hesitate to say that it is a pillar of the European security architecture, because architecture is too static a metaphor. EU and NATO enlargements have changed the institutional set-up in Europe, while other changes – such as integration, globalization, and new security threats – have altered the agenda. Because of the speed and depth of these changes, it is no wonder that so many organizations are going through a reform process. If we fail to keep up to speed in this changing world, we will soon become irrelevant.

In discussions of new security threats and new security paradigms, two trends are becoming apparent, both of which favour the OSCE. The first is that security issues are so complex, inter-linked and diverse that a holistic approach is needed. As you may know, the OSCE has always looked at security in a comprehensive way.

In his recent report entitled "In Larger Freedom", UN Secretary General Kofi Annan talks about the link between development, security and human rights. For Europe, this link was forged thirty years ago in the Helsinki Final Act, and must be further strengthened today.

The second trend is that security is indivisible, and therefore we need an effective multi-lateral response. The OSCE is an inclusive organization, pooling the interests and capacities of 55 States from the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions in a way designed to tackle common problems.

I have been concerned in the past few months that the common ground on which these States stand, seems rather shaky. But I am far from disheartened. The OSCE should be a means for identifying common issues, discussing common concerns, and taking collective action. As I have stressed to critics of the OSCE, the OSCE is part of the solution and not part of the problem. So the challenge – particularly for the Chairman-in-Office – is to try to broaden the basis of our co-operation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2005 is an anniversary year for the OSCE. We are marking thirty years since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, which was so crucial for linking security with economic issues and human rights, and for launching a process that unified a divided continent. We are also celebrating fifteen years since the signing of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, which marked the end of the Cold War and ushered in a new era of security and co-operation in Europe.

Recent events in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan show that the OSCE and the participating States still have plenty of work to do. We have not reached the End of History.

These are dramatic and sensitive times. Transparency, functioning legal infrastructure, and cooperation are crucial in confronting today's security challenges. We must improve security

between leaders and their people, between States, and within organizations that foster and export security. The "C" in OSCE stands for co-operation, which has been one of the keys to our success in the past three decades.

If inter-state relations in Europe – and the world for that matter – are to progress constructively, they need to be based on co-operation. This is the main lesson of the OSCE, and it is instructive to other regions of the world, including Asia.

It is up to the parties involved to define what form of multilateral security co-operation – for example in Northeast Asia – they wish to pursue. I know that a number of proposals have been discussed. It is not for the OSCE to suggest an Asian equivalent. The Helsinki concept cannot simply be franchised to another region.

But there are plenty of commonalities that can be discussed and experiences that can be shared, and the OSCE-Korea Conference offers a perfect opportunity to do so.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have a full and interesting programme. It is a proof of an active dialogue between Europe and Asia on issues of common concerns.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bulgaria, a member of the OSCE Troika, for its able leadership of the Asian Contact Group. Ambassador Petrov's support for joint activities with the Asian Partners and his input into the dialogue with the Partner States bodes well for future co-operation.

I look forward to welcoming the Partners for Co-operation to the Ministerial Council meeting in Ljubljana in December. I hope that there, we can take further steps in strengthening our partnership with States and organizations outside the OSCE area.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and I look forward to the recommendations emanating from this event.

Thank you!