

Opening Remarks

ENGLISH only

**Lamberto Zannier
OSCE Secretary General****2016 OSCE ASIAN CONFERENCE
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Deputy Permanent Secretary Poolthup
Ambassador Riedel,
Ambassador Žugić,
Secretary General Le Luong Minh,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Foreign Ministry of Thailand for hosting us in their beautiful capital, and Ambassador Srisamoot and his team in Vienna for the excellent work and co-operation with the OSCE Secretariat and the Serbian Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group in preparing this conference.

The topics that have been chosen by Thailand and Serbia for discussion today are very timely and very important to us. They closely align with the focus areas that we have worked very hard on over the past months and years. If you look at the agenda promoted by the German OSCE Chairmanship or the topics addressed by recent OSCE Security Days, migration, countering radicalization and promoting dialogue have been in the key focus of our discussions. We must maintain this momentum, so I am very pleased that the debates are being taken forward also with the Asian Partners for Co-operation.

I would also like to use this opportunity to thank Thailand and Serbia for having initiated and promoted the inclusion of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the programme of this event. Regional organizations like the OSCE and ASEAN have an important role to play in the implementation of the new sustainable development goals.

The OSCE is first and foremost a security organization, but its longstanding focus and co-operation on hard and soft security issues have a direct impact on development. In that regard, the OSCE's major contribution to the implementation of the Agenda will be its enduring engagement in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. At the same time, more and more of the challenges we face today are inextricably linked to delivering on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the OSCE offers some powerful tools to support the realization of the UN's plan of action for protecting our people, our planet and our prosperity.

To give you just a few concrete examples related to the topics that we will be discussing in the course of this event:

- The 2030 Agenda underlines the need for effective governance as a precondition for sustainable development. The OSCE has a proven track-record in assisting its participating States in building up and strengthening effective, accountable and

transparent institutions in a broad array of governmental areas, including counter terrorism, counter-narcotics, anti-corruption, migration governance and integrated border management.

- The 2030 Agenda seeks to combat inequalities and discrimination and contains a commitment to “leave no one behind”. The OSCE is doing its part toward reaching this objective by leveraging its comprehensive approach to security, which is centred on strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights, to create and sustain democratic, inclusive and prosperous societies.
- Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls is a critically important Sustainable Development Goal. It also forms a cornerstone of the OSCE’s security approach, which aims at mainstreaming gender into policies and activities at both the State and Organization level.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The visionary but challenging Sustainable Development Agenda can only be implemented if we are able to forge partnerships that span beyond regional boundaries. As transnational and global challenges become increasingly complex and intertwined, they pose a growing threat to sustainable development that no single country, organization or region can tackle alone. The return of geopolitics has increased the hurdle for co-operative approaches, but it is a hurdle that can be overcome. Earlier this year – as we will hear during the side-event chaired by US Ambassador Baer later today – the OSCE participating States agreed on new confidence-building measures introducing a consultation mechanism in case of cyber-attacks. One of the aims is to effectively mitigate attacks on critical infrastructure that could affect more than one state. This shows that we can achieve consensus on important issues even at a time when tensions are high.

This should also encourage us all, as suggested by previous speakers, to take an operational approach and to move beyond simply expressing the need for increased co-operation with the Asian Partners to implementing this co-operation in concrete terms. In that spirit, we look forward to sharing our expertise – from countering radicalization to supporting the economic empowerment of women, to addressing migration-related challenges – including by coming up with new proposals and projects for practical co-operation in these important areas.

Finally, I would like to welcome the presence with us today of ASEAN Secretary General Le Luong Minh, with whom I had the pleasure of meeting a number of times in the past to discuss ways to enhance co-operation between our organizations, including in supporting implementation of UN policies and strategies in the spirit of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. As suggested by deputy Permanent Secretary of Thailand Poolthup, this conference can provide a good opportunity to discuss the enhancement of our co-operation with ASEAN.

Thank you and I wish you all the best for a successful conference.