



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria in the  
context of Austria's 2018 Chairmanship of the OSCE Asian Contact Group  
Conference on  
„Effective Multilateralism in a Globalized World-  
The Case of Europe and Asia Pacific”**

**Secretary General Thomas Greminger**

*Vienna, 16 May 2018*

Thank you, Mr. Moderator,

Foreign Minister Kneissl,  
Excellencies,  
Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for inviting me to address this conference. I am very grateful to Austria, this year's Chair of our OSCE Asian Contact Group, for dedicating this event to the topic of effective multilateralism. We know, Minister, that Middle East and Asia are at the core of your preoccupation.

Over the past months, on different occasions, I have repeatedly stressed that multilateral co-operation is needed more than ever in our increasingly inter-connected world. Even the most powerful countries need to work with others to cope with transnational threats and challenges.

To that end, I would like to concentrate on three themes:

- Dialogue
- Connectivity; and
- Partnership

## **First, Dialogue**

In a sense we are going back to the roots. As you know, our Organization was originally created as an inclusive platform for dialogue to reduce tensions and foster greater cooperation during the Cold War. Today, we are once again facing a highly polarized environment with growing tensions affecting inter-state relations in Europe. Dialogue, trust building, and inter-acting in a predictable way based on a commonly agreed set of principles, have again taken on major significance.

But the OSCE is not an island, especially not in today's interconnected world. Dialogue with other regions on topics of shared concerns is also vital.

At a global level, the OSCE engages with the United Nations and other counterparts as a regional arrangement of the United Nations under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. I see plenty of scope for the OSCE taking on a greater role in the regional implementation of global initiatives and commitments, like the Sustainable Development Goals, and the sustaining peace agenda.

Excellencies,

**My second theme is Connectivity.** Links between Asia and the OSCE area are becoming stronger. And I think that it is not surprising that within the OSCE Asian Partnership connectivity has been chosen as a thematic focus for 2018 with three out of five Contact group meetings focusing on regional connectivity and trade facilitation.

The rise of China and its growing economic influence on Europe is a game changer. The “One Belt, One Road” initiative (BRI) goes through the heart of the OSCE area.

Asia and the OSCE also have overlapping – and I hope converging – interests in Central Asia, where a new regional dynamic of co-operation is emerging,

thanks to a large extent but not exclusively to an amazing transformation of Uzbekistan. Unleashing economic opportunities, water management, but also working together to prevent and counter violent extremism, deal with transnational threats, and enhance border control are common goals. The impact of the new “Spirit of Central Asia” can be felt well beyond the region, and we should all encourage its continued positive momentum. In particular, it can only have positive repercussion for Afghanistan, which should stimulate OSCE’s continued engagement with this Partner country.

To be sustainable, connectivity requires predictability. Closer economic links are not a guarantee for co-operation. Rather, there must be an environment where relations can grow – whether it be trade, tourism, cultural or political contacts. And that environment is created by effective multilateralism.

That is why, in the OSCE experience, confidence-building measures and a shared normative framework have proven so useful. If the OSCE/CSCE experience can be inspirational in any way – and the latest developments in the Korean peninsula immediately comes to my mind – we are certainly at your disposal.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**My third theme is Partnership.**

As members of the international community, we have a shared responsibility and a common interest in promoting co-operation, peace and stability.

In an inter-connected world, what happens in one region can have an impact on another. We have seen how this can play out with regard to the security situation in the Korean peninsula, the Indo Pacific security dynamic, challenges posed by large flows of refugees and migrants, cyber threats, and the spread of violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism. These are just some examples of the stakes we share. Asia's increasing economic weight and geostrategic importance have a considerable impact on stability and security in Europe and it will continue to do so. So it is clear that we have a common interest to work together, and to learn from each other. In that sense, OSCE Asian Partnership provides a unique forum for a meaningful exchange of best practices on how to address complex threats and challenges that defy borders and, quite simply, to stay in touch.

There is another valuable dimension to our partnership, namely relations with Asia-based regional organizations. We are constantly exploring possibilities to develop structured co-operation on issues of common interest. In 2015, the Swiss Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group proposed increasing co-operation in the following areas: counter-terrorism, disaster risk reduction, information and communications technology security/cyber-security, and structured co-operation with Asian regional organizations, namely ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum. Some of this was successfully implemented through inter-regional events hosted by several Asian Partners, and through Asian Partners' support for OSCE projects and activities. But we could do more to advance structured co-operation with Asian regional organizations, including

exploring possibilities for greater working-level co-operation. Indeed, perhaps – as we are exploring with our Mediterranean Partners – it is time to consider a more strategic approach to co-operation between the OSCE and our Asian Partners. Thank you, Minister Kneissl, for your support of this approach.

Having partnerships is vital, but we also need to leverage them. Effective multilateralism means playing to our strengths. What is it that we can do better together than we cannot do on our own, either as states or as organizations? What experiences, good practices and lessons can we share? How can we work together? This is how I would like us to approach our relations with Asian regional and sub-regional organizations like the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

And we should be seeking new partners: like with development actors, international financial institutions, aid agencies, and the private sector. Our experience in the OSCE is also that civil society, academia, and parliamentarians can be valuable partners.

In short, I believe that dialogue, connectivity and partnership are keywords for defining relations between the OSCE and its Asian Partners for Co-operation and between the OSCE and institutional partners in the region. So I deeply appreciate Austria's initiative for today's event, with its inclusive agenda featuring both international and Asian regional partners. It is exactly initiatives like this which strengthen relationships between regions, create new synergies, and eventually contribute to effective multilateralism in a globalized world; the main topic for our meeting today.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to our discussions today.