



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Secretariat

Conflict Prevention Centre

Conference on Parliamentary Oversight of Armed Forces, Police and Security Forces in the OSCE Area

(Vienna, 24 – 25 May 2004)

Introductory Remarks by the Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre Ambassador Lamberto Zannier

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you on behalf of the Conflict Prevention Centre of the OSCE to this Conference. We are very pleased to see in this room parliamentarians and government officials from many OSCE participating States who responded to our invitation to join us to discuss the important issues of parliamentary oversight of armed force, police and security forces in the OSCE area.

The OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21st Century outlines the importance of co-operation between OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and other OSCE bodies and institutions in all relevant activities. One of the aims of the Conference is to strengthen interaction and co-operation between the Secretariat and the OSCE PA and through that with Parliaments of participating States to join our efforts in responding to new threats to security in the OSCE region.

Participants will be aware that co-operation between CPC and PA on the Code of Conduct is already well developed. In 2002 a joint initiative took place in Belgrade with the aim to promote awareness of the parliamentary oversight of armed forces outlined in the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. Fostering a dialogue between parliamentarians and parliament committees involved in the oversight of the armed forces and ministries concerned was a main purpose of this regional event. Also the provisions of Code with regard to the OSCE participating States activities on preventing and combating terrorism were highlighted.

In June 2003 a similar regional seminar was held Kiev, Ukraine. This time the emphasis was placed on the parliamentary responsibilities outlined in the Code. These responsibilities include, inter alia, democratic political control of all elements of armed and security forces, as well as intelligence services; legislative approval of defence expenditures and their compatibility with defence policies and military doctrines, and adoption of legislation on rights and duties of armed forces personnel. In addition, seven national workshops were also held in the Caucasus and in Central Asian states.

The participants in our joint seminars have had an opportunity to exchange views and share national experiences on the implementation of parliamentary oversight over different fields of

military activity. Special attention has been paid to reforming national armed forces and bringing them into compliance with current security requirements. These seminars have also provided participants with an opportunity to learn practical examples and thoughts from parliamentarians of other OSCE participating States and experts from research institutes.

There is no doubt that these joint CPC-PA events have not only promoted co-operation between the OSCE institutions but also offered the possibility to national parliamentarians to address these important issues in an international setting, discuss with their colleagues from other countries and take account of lessons learned elsewhere.

The main challenge for us today is to review how the valuable principles, norms and standards set out in the Code have been applied to the parliamentary work and how they have been turned into relevant legislation. In this context, the broader involvement of parliamentarians in the Code implementation plays a particularly important role, especially with a view to ensuring the development of a proper legislative basis for democratic control of armed forces, police and security forces.

One of the fundamental roles of our Organization has been in fact the development of principles and rules governing the action of armed forces. These agreements set norms, principles and standards to states and their armed forces by regulating military activities, military holdings and transfer or trade of weapons and, in the case of Code of Conduct, the behaviour of the armed forces personnel and the relationship between the armed forces and society. Guidance in reforming the security sector of States is needed and is particularly important during a period of transition and related reforms. In this respect, civilian control has an even more special significance today than ever before. Therefore, the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security is regarded as an effective tool in promoting democratic control of armed and security forces. It is an integral part of the OSCE system of politically binding norms.

I look forward to an open and fruitful discussion in the course of two coming days. The presentations prepared by speakers that represent both parliaments and think tank centres and institutions will undoubtedly provide a good basis for a lively exchange of views and experiences. I sincerely wish all success to all parliamentarians present today at this Conference and hope that this event among others would assist you in your work when ever these issues are addressed in your national parliaments.

Thank you for your attention.