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**Rt. Hon. Bruce George, M.P.**

**President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

**Address to the OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting**

**Maastricht, 1 December 2003**

Madam Acting President of Georgia,  
Mr. Prime Minister  
Mr. Foreign Minister / Chairman in Office of the OSCE,  
Ministers,  
Mr. Secretary General of the OSCE,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me enormous pleasure to address the Eleventh Ministerial Council of the OSCE. I am proud to be speaking on behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly which has and will work so very closely with the OSCE to achieve our common objectives. Our destinies are inextricably intertwined.

May I commence with expressing the Assembly's enormous appreciation to Foreign Minister De Hoop Scheffer and his team both in The Hague and in Vienna for their very substantial contribution to the work of the OSCE and to helping create such a good working relationship with the Assembly. It would be remiss of me not to congratulate him on his appointment as Secretary – General of NATO. He will bring to that role his vast experience as a Parliamentarian, Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, and Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE. It will not be a sad farewell for many of you however as no doubt many of the Foreign Ministers of this illustrious body be meeting him on a regular basis in Brussels. No doubt the Minister will bear in mind the words of a famous British movie song, 'Always look on the bright side of life', and remember he will be only dealing on a day to day basis with nineteen, soon to be twenty-six, Foreign and Defence Ministers, and their Ambassadors not fifty-five as of this time!

No doubt he is sure to also realize from his many NATO Council meetings that although NATO has a consensus rule like the OSCE, it has evolved different ways of being flexible so as not to allow a paralysis of non-decision making. As I said in my last speech to you a year ago, and I apologise for repeating myself, "Consensus has its price. If that price is the absence of taking the right and necessary decision or to postpone the right decisions, or to dilute the decisions, one may wonder if the price to be paid is too high". Perhaps you may look again at the Assembly's principle of occasionally using 'approximate consensus'.

I am not seeking to be sycophantic to the Chairman-in-Office, but the Dutch Chairmanship, in my view, has been;

- Extremely active and well organised;
- Has sought to enhance the visibility of the OSCE, and this highly desirable, for one recent commentator called it, “the Cinderella of European security organisations”;
- The OSCE has continued to be active through its institutions and field activities and we in the Assembly have contributed notably in election monitoring where we work closely and usually very harmoniously with the ODIHR and other Parliamentary Assemblies. On 2 November I was the Chairman-in-Office’s special Representative in the Republic of Georgia I note the presence here of the acting President of Georgia Ms. Nino Burjanadze who has a most difficult task in the weeks ahead, not least as she remains one of my Vice-Presidents! Later this week I shall be undertaking a similar mission on behalf of the Chairman-in-Office, though I hope not too similar when I lead a team of over 100 Parliamentarians to monitor the Parliamentary elections in the Russian Federation;
- The Dutch Chairmanship has been active in seeking greater involvement of the Partners.

I say very briefly, however, that the Organisation has worked hard on reform though as I have just said the reform of decision making lags behind.

The OSCE is but one, although I would say in this company wouldn’t I, the most important of the Euro-Atlantic, Euro-Asian institutions? However I proclaim loudly, positively and modestly that we are the only true Pan-European security organisation that has a crucial and UNIQUE role in enhancing overall security both amongst and within states. The OSCE, along with NATO, the EU and other Transatlantic and European institutions, must develop its commitment to realizing the vision of an Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Asian community of values, without artificial and hostile dividing lines, and with the minimum of competition, so that all of our citizens and states feel more secure.

I very much welcome also the initiative of the Dutch Chairmanship to devote this Ministerial Council meeting to the response strategy of the OSCE on threats to security and stability in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We in the assembly have been working on a similar track.

I very much welcome also and support the strategy document on this subject presented by the Chairmanship, and I hope that it will be adopted, and acted upon, by this Council.

My time is too limited to repeat in any detail the challenges we face individually and collectively; the security paradigm has changed. The OSCE's comprehensive approach to security which looks to security not only in traditional military terms but also includes addressing ethnic conflicts, global and indigenous terrorism, underdevelopment, serious democratic deficits in many member countries, environmental degradation and the potential for environmental conflicts, the abuse of human rights, organised international crime including drugs, the darker side of globalisation. I applaud the Dutch Presidency for its initiatives on better dealing with trafficking which is the modern form of slavery. The list of threats and risks, most of which are intertwined goes on and on and on. From the very beginnings of the CSCE/OSCE it has taken the Comprehensive Approach to these critical issues. We, as an institution, cannot deal with them alone, but the other side of the coin is that the other institutions cannot do it without us.

I focus on just a few of the issues I have just mentioned foremost amongst which is the international fight against terrorism.

Terrorism goes back at least two millennia, yet we are now facing its most dangerous lethal and perverted form. Some call it post-modern terrorism, others super-terrorism. Al-Qaeda has transformed terrorist organisation, strategy and mode of operation. It operates on a truly global stage, targeting Muslim and non Muslim states, societies and their innocent civilians. It is true that much has been done by nation-states, regional and international organisations and the private sector of industry and commerce. Much progress has been made and I applaud the initiatives and actions of the OSCE in both preventing and combating terrorism, yet I must point out that unfortunately whilst we have been adapting, and notwithstanding so have they, and in consequence the threat has probably increased rather than diminished. I am afraid the modern nation-state is not well equipped, some might add even incapable of fighting terrorism on a global scale. They must work collectively and be prepared to tell their citizens that this conflict which is not with the Muslim world, but with Muslim extremists, and that it will take years or decades to resolve.

Much nonsense has been written and spoken about this apparently inevitable 'clash of civilisations'. In many ways there has grown up a myth of confrontation. We amongst all organisations and institutions are best placed to meet many of these challenges and threats.

We have amongst our membership Muslim states and we work well together. We have all learnt to our cost that perverted terrorism sees its fellow Muslims as legitimate targets. May I here express my deepest sympathies to those representatives of states who have suffered such a genuine loss of

life at and the hands of these self-appointed assassins. Our thoughts must go out most recently to the nearly fifty Turkish, Turkish-Jewish, and British citizens living and working in Turkey.

Islam is practised by a fifth of the world's population, very many of whom live and work peacefully in countries like mine, indeed in the constituency I represent. Western criticisms of Islam and the negative political and media stereotypes of Muslims helps to confirm Islamist paranoia about a supposed Western/Christian/"Crusader" plot to eradicate Islam. Yes there has been a long history of tensions, crises and wars but we have given much that is positive to each other. The threat posed by radical terror Islamist groups will continue to test the international community, its institutions, its resources and its will to the limit. We must succeed in improving relations, building bridges, connecting cultures and civilizations and in this task the role of our OSCE is of critical importance.

When I became President of the Assembly last year I set as one of my highest priorities not only the raising of the salience of the Mediterranean region to the OSCE and Assembly but of improving significantly the relationship between the Assembly and the OSCE with its Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation. Defining the Mediterranean is well nigh impossible, but I suppose in a way what I am really saying is we should be doing more to reassure and relate with Muslim States in north Africa, the Middle East and in the rest of the world, including an increased commitment to our member States in Central Asia.

With due respect I do not think the relationship with our partner nations has gone far yet toward first base, though I was delighted to address the recent 2003 Mediterranean Seminar, held at Aqaba, Jordan, on 'The comprehensive approach to security: The OSCE experience and its relevance for the Mediterranean region'. In my presentation I listed in some detail what we in the Assembly have done and will be doing to deepen and broaden this relationship. Jan Kubis spoke at that seminar of what the OSCE can and proposes to do.

I would very much welcome the adoption of the resolution proposed by the Presidency, 'Identifying additional fields of co-operation and interaction with the partners for co-operation and exploring the possibility of expanding the OSCE norms, principles and commitments to other areas'.

I see this as a logical extension of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 which affirmed that 'Security in Europe is to be considered in the broader context of world security and is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean as a whole.

I have invited the Foreign Ministers of Algeria and Jordan to address our Assembly over the next nine months; for Parliamentarians from partner countries to accompany us on election-observation and field mission visits. We now have established annual Mediterranean conferences. Our last Mediterranean Forum a few months ago was in Rome, linked to a Conference on the Freedom of Religion. Our principal speaker, I dare call him that, was his Holiness the Pope, and I defy any organisation to match that speakers list.

I have been invited to address a meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in Dacca, Senegal. So we are getting there slowly – possibly near at first base as for the Assembly is concerned.

So much of what you have done has been positive but I respectfully suggest reform agenda must be continued. You have done much good work on peace-keeping though I cannot detect any documentation on the agenda. There is more to be done in the field of civil conflict solution and there are still too many conflicts, or potential conflicts in which we are involved, that have not yet been resolved. I admire enormously what has been done on police reform. I believe there is much scope for this to be expanded, until of course the commensurate increase in funding.

Our Assembly has just responded, for the second time to an invitation by the Chairman in Office and the Secretary General to comment on the 2004, Unified Budget Proposal. This gives concrete form to what we would like to see happening to the OSCE as a whole and its response to conflicts in the twenty first century. We hope that our views, comments, and even recommendations have been and will be given serious consideration since they are offered in the spirit of constructive criticism.

In conclusion, Chairman-in-Office and distinguished colleagues, may I assure you of our continuing desire to work ever more closely with you;

- that I believe the best guarantee to an effective and fruitful cooperation would be to have greater access for our representative in Vienna, to any organ, subsidiary organ or working group of the permanent council;
- We wish to offer ourselves not only as a Partner in concrete activities but to enhance our already formidable list of activities working for you. We shall do more to lobby on your

behalf but also function as a possible think-tank and laboratory where new ideas can be invented and tested before they enter the field of diplomatic negotiations.

- And may I conclude by welcoming Bulgaria and my friend of over a decade, Foreign Minister of Bulgaria Solomon Passy to the Chairmanship-in-Office on January 1<sup>st</sup>, I am confident that despite any difficulties that may exist internal or external the OSCE has an enormous potential to help the broader Europe and beyond to become an area of peace, stability and cooperation.

In conclusion may I express the hope that the international community will dig deeply in its pockets to assist Georgia in their period of crisis.

Georgia needs assistance for its elections, but more than that. It is almost a failed state . It needs support in the form of experts to help create good governance; it needs expertise to help free and fair elections so that the January elections meet international standards, and above all it needs resources for economic growth.

We are here alongside you and dare I say it, in some instances, slightly in front of you.

Thank you