



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**OSCE Review Conference
Opening Plenary**

OSCE Secretary General

Warsaw
30 September 2010

Minister Zhigalov,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our meeting today is not business as usual.

In opening the OSCE Review Conference, we launch the process that will lead to the first OSCE Summit of Heads of State and Government in eleven years. The OSCE Summit will be held in Astana on 1-2 December -- the first time in Central Asia and under the Chairmanship of Kazakhstan. In this alone, the Astana OSCE Summit will symbolise the unique face of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian organization that stretches, indeed, from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

The 2010 OSCE Summit is also more than this. It is an opportunity for the participating States to open a new chapter for Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security co-operation. In our shared history, there have been similar moments when the participating States have needed to come together to strengthen the foundations of co-operative, comprehensive and indivisible

security. Such moments occurred in Helsinki in 1975, in Paris in 1990 and in Istanbul in 1999. I believe that we stand before a similar moment today.

The progress that the OSCE participating States have achieved since 1975 has transformed the face of Europe and unleashed forces that helped to change the world itself. We should take pride in the momentous changes that we have accomplished within societies and States and in the relations between them.

At the same time, we cannot shy away from recognizing the complexity of current developments. The Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area faces a range of different security challenges.

We should be clear-eyed. Challenges arise from problems that still divide the participating States – including from unresolved conflicts and their terrible impact, and also from the current uncertainty facing the conventional arms control regime. The crisis in Kyrgyzstan has reminded all of us how volatile the blend can be between state weakness, political instability and ethnic tensions. Conflict in Georgia in August 2008 underlined the tensions that endure. Across the continent, States continue to struggle with the challenge of building democratic systems.

Threats arise also from outside the OSCE area, especially from the spill over of instability in neighbouring regions, including Afghanistan. Transnational threats include international terrorism, organised crime, drug trafficking and the trafficking in human beings. In addition, new threats are emerging – such as those undermining energy and cyber security.

Taken together, all of these problems raise the question of the unity of the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasia area. Challenges pull States in different directions. Divisions have emerged, sometimes even inside States. New lines of division are seen to be drawn across our common space.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Astana OSCE Summit is a chance for all participating States to engage anew with the vision that was born in Helsinki in 1975 of building a “Europe whole and free, and at peace with itself.” The common objective of the participating States is to continue building a unified Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian community of States that works together on the basis of the principle of common, co-operative, comprehensive and indivisible security.

The OSCE is the fitting place to undertake this task. For thirty five years, the OSCE has proved itself as an unparalleled laboratory of ideas and instruments for tackling complex threats to security. In turbulent times, I am convinced that the OSCE represents for the participating States a unique structure for rules-based international governance.

The OSCE model of international governance works from a multi-dimensional and comprehensive concept of security. It relies on a permanent process of consultation and dialogue that allows for burning issues of the day to be raised and to be addressed quickly and efficiently. The spirit of dialogue is underpinned by the principles of equality and consensus. This makes running the Organisation a challenge, but it also ensures strong ownership by all of the participating States.

In addition, the participating States have agreed that domestic developments in each of them are a concern to all. On this basis, the OSCE has developed close ties with civil society, from NGOs to business groups and the academic world. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly plays a vital role also in developing a parliamentary dimension. In support of their work, the participating States have created unique institutions in the shape of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, as well as the specialised units of the Secretariat. All of these have been designed to support States and societies in implementing their commitments through a dense schedule of meetings and activities organised throughout the year.

The OSCE model of governance has met much success over time, but it requires constant attention. The OSCE adds up to more than the sum of these parts. But to fulfil the ambitions that remain at its heart, the OSCE depends on the engagement of each of the participating States and their political good will. The OSCE is a living project that is constantly refined, on the basis of equality and in the spirit of co-operative security. This is an exciting but also challenging process.

Far from being static, OSCE commitments are a dynamic and living body, constantly being tailored to address new challenges and adjusted to fit the changing face of old ones. Here is the essence of the OSCE as a political forum -- whose vitality derives from the political will engaged in its workings by each and every participating State.

The 2010 Review Conference reminds us of the core message of the Organization: that the implementation of commitments requires a process of constant support, debate and review, where all issues are put on the table as being equally important. It has been said that review is the fourth basket of Helsinki – it was called ‘follow-up’ at that point. The point is that review is part of the genetic code of the OSCE. Review is vital for implementation, in the spirit of partnership, support and solidarity.

The segment of the Review Conference that will follow in Warsaw is a reminder of another core message -- that fundamental freedoms and human rights lie at the heart of comprehensive security. The idea that genuine security must be built around the ‘inherent dignity of the individual’ was radical in 1975. It remains sharply relevant today.

Thus, the 2010 Review Conference and Astana Summit are great opportunities for all participating States -- to strengthen their commitment to building a community of States on the basis of comprehensive, co-operative and indivisible security, to address the problems that still divide this community and to bolster their action against the challenges that they share in common.

The OSCE is here to support these goals. Its experience is rich and its toolbox is diverse. It can be made stronger and its actions can be sharper. This is also one of the stakes of the process that we launch today.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OSCE was born as a travelling conference in 1975, before becoming an Organization in 1994 and developing the features with which we are today familiar. The Organization helped set rules for the Cold War and supported its peaceful outcome. It has worked to build confidence after wars and to maintain peace and stability during revolutions. It has survived these developments, and it has worked to ensure that they evolved as peacefully as possible. The task today is to set directions for Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security in a new century and in a new context. History has shown that the leaders of participating States can do this; they can do this again.

Previous OSCE Summits have produced final documents and declarations that affirmed the aspiration of the participating States to continue working together towards indivisible, comprehensive and co-operative security in our shared Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space.

Some of these aspirations were met, but many remain unfulfilled.

Almost twenty years after end of the Cold War, we find ourselves in a new world, where security challenges come not as a result of confrontation between the two hostile ideological and military blocs, but from a spectrum of state and non-state actors across the globe -- where economic and environmental concerns often shape and drive our understanding of the current political moment – where the universality of the values of democracy and human rights as international concerns has been challenged.

The scale of change we are witnessing must not discourage us, nor shall it lead us into temptation to frantically look for dramatically new solutions. The OSCE Review Conference and the Astana Summit are moments for the participating States to look steadily and together to a future of shared destiny and united effort. This is the stake of our meeting.

Thank you for listening.