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VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY  
AND MEMBER OF THE AUSTRIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL,  
AT THE OPENING PLENARY SESSION OF THE  
2010 OSCE REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Vienna, 18 October 2010

I am pleased to be given the opportunity as a representative of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly of opening this important conference, the second part of the preparations for the meeting of Heads of State or Government of the OSCE in December, together with my government colleagues. The President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Petros Efthymiou, whom I am also representing today, is currently in Vilnius to meet next year's Chairperson-in-Office and to take part in events organized by the Lithuanian Parliament. He cannot therefore take part in person today but sends his warmest greetings.

It is also a particular pleasure for me to be able to address you because I can do so in my own country and in my own language. As the host country of the OSCE, Austria is particularly attached to your Organization, and the members of the National Council follow your work with particular interest.

In fact three conferences will be taking place in the next few days to consider two of the three OSCE baskets and the OSCE's activities and structures. During the 18 years of its existence the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has addressed all of the issues involved in great detail. At our annual meetings we also adopt recommendations for the work of the OSCE and we offer suggestions at seminars, conferences and through contributions to ongoing discussions in the OSCE. As an example, I might cite the report of the Washington Colloquium published in 2005, which is still highly relevant, particularly with regard to the topics to be considered over the next few days. The Parliamentary Assembly has always urged that our proposals be taken into consideration in your deliberations, and this Review Conference will provide an outstanding opportunity in that respect.

It will also provide an opportunity for studying how the OSCE has handled our recommendations. To facilitate this, the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Accountability in the OSCE presented a paper at our Fall Meeting in Palermo that summarizes in a concise and structured form our main recommendations on the issues that you have addressed in the last few months in the Corfu Process. I recommend that you study this report closely; not only does it contain important suggestions and recommendations, but it was also drafted in consultation with all the members of the Committee. This is particularly significant because the Committee is made up of experienced colleagues from all geographical areas and political orientations within the OSCE. This gives you a rare

opportunity to consider a document that was compiled, like your decisions, by consensus. Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, the Special Representative of the Parliamentary Assembly, who represents our Assembly on a permanent basis in Vienna, will no doubt come back to this on suitable occasions during the Conference.

As you know, the Parliamentary Assembly has a dual character. First, we represent the parliamentary dimension of the OSCE, endowing the Organization with additional legitimacy and transparency. As a parliamentary body we enter into dialogue at the political level with the political entities within the Organization. Among ourselves, we parliamentarians discuss the core political questions in the OSCE and act as intermediaries between the national parliaments and multilateral diplomacy. This also gives us the opportunity to promote the Organization, for example with those responsible for our national budgets.

We continue to see a great need for reform in the democratic dimension of the Organization. As long as international diplomacy fails to realize that without transparency and direct accountability to the citizens of our States themselves even the most well-meaning technocracy will fall short of the democratic ideals to which the OSCE has committed itself since the Charter of Paris at the latest, we shall remain critical of the executive authorities.

For that reason, we have advocated a political role for the OSCE Secretary General and also sought a say in his or her appointment and in the appointment of the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the most important human rights body. We also call for a more independent and professional external audit and recommend the participation of the Parliamentary Assembly in that task as well.

At the same time, the Parliamentary Assembly is an OSCE institution, similar to the government institutions. In this capacity we work closely with our partners in the Organization. A core aspect of our co-operation are the visits to the field missions. We hold the missions in particularly high esteem and are always willing to assist them in their difficult work. The same applies to the other institutions and to the Secretariat, with which we are in permanent dialogue.

As an example, I should like to mention the seminars on the democratic control of security forces held together with the Conflict Prevention Centre, or the inter-dimensional events on migration and – to mention a somewhat more detailed aspect – trafficking in human beings. At our Fall Meeting in Palermo two weeks ago, again in close co-operation with the government institutions, we discussed the fight against transnational organized crime and corruption.

We have a special role in election observation. I myself returned yesterday from a preliminary mission to Azerbaijan, where I will be heading the short-term OSCE observation mission in two weeks' time. During this mission we will not only be co-ordinating with those parliamentary observers who work along the same lines as we do and would like to be part of the mission but will also be working closely with the long-term ODIHR observers. Their experience gives us mission heads important points of reference for preparing our initial assessment of the election on the day after the voting, and their logistical and administrative support will help us to accomplish the tasks we have been set.

It is my firm conviction that the preliminary assessment on the day after the voting can only be in the interests of the country and its inhabitants if it is an accurate reflection of our unequivocal observations, with an evaluation that still leaves doors open. Election monitoring is basically a question of encouraging a country to continuously improve its democratic system and not to rap constitutionally established governments and parliaments on the knuckles and demote them to recipients of orders from an international community whose structure to date has been anything but democratic.

In view of what has been said, I would urge you over the next few days to take a look at yourselves and the way you work. With this in mind I wish this Review Conference every success.