



Conference on the 20th Anniversary of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat

Ashgabat, 17 April 2019

OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger

Opening remarks

*Foreign Minister Meredov,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for co-organizing and hosting this conference to mark the 20th anniversary of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat. Thank you for your warm welcome and hospitality.

I am delighted to see numerous partners of the OSCE present today, from the government and state institutions, civil society and the diplomatic community. I would like to express my sincere gratitude, on behalf of the OSCE, for your dedicated co-operation and support over the past two decades.

While today we are focusing on the 20 years since the establishment of an OSCE field presence in Turkmenistan, in fact, the relationship between the OSCE and Turkmenistan dates back at least a quarter of a century. Our joint trajectory was formalized in 1992. That year Turkmenistan became a participating State of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and started to play its role in supporting the OSCE's evolution into the Organization we know today.

Earlier today, I discussed OSCE-Turkmenistan co-operation with President Berdimuhamedov. We spoke about Turkmenistan's role in ensuring regional development, stability and security and the OSCE's contribution in supporting Turkmenistan's priorities, including further progress towards greater regional co-operation.

Last August, at President Berdimuhamedov's initiative, Turkmenistan hosted the Summit of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea. This year, Turkmenistan's efforts in promoting economic connectivity across the Caspian Sea region will culminate in the first Caspian Economic Forum.

The progressive transformation of relations in the region is offering new opportunities for more effectively addressing common challenges. The OSCE, with its presence in all five Central Asian states, can be a great vehicle for fostering further positive change.

Ladies and gentlemen,

OSCE field operations are an excellent tool for co-operation. They provide effective platforms for sharing lessons learned and best practices. They also allow the host country to benefit from direct in-country interaction with the OSCE in a way that responds to the country's priorities.

The regular communication established with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and relevant government agencies has improved efficiency and enhanced the positive impact of our projects. Setting priorities together is helping us to ensure stronger ownership and a better understanding of where the OSCE's niche lies in supporting Turkmenistan's development.

I am especially grateful to Ambassador Nurberdiev. We regularly meet to discuss how the OSCE can better assist Turkmenistan in implementing OSCE commitments and how Turkmenistan can support the work of the Organization.

Looking ahead, at 2019 and beyond, we plan to continue engaging government, civil society, academia and youth, as well as working closely with Turkmenistan in identifying opportunities for further co-operation and partnership. I encourage both our Turkmen partners and the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat to plan strategically and over a longer time horizon of three to five years. This would allow us to better support Turkmenistan's national reform efforts. It would also be in keeping with the "fit for purpose" agenda that I have proposed to participating States.

President Berdimuhamedov has recently launched a series of reforms to enhance the country's socio-economic development. These initiatives seek to restructure governmental institutions and redefine national priorities, so that Turkmenistan can reach its full economic potential.

The OSCE stands ready to contribute to these high-level initiatives. I encourage Turkmenistan to use the momentum of this reform to further consolidate democratic institutions, respect for human rights and the rule of law, in line with the Programme of Socio-economic Development of Turkmenistan for 2019-2025 and the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2016-2020.

In this context, strengthening strategic co-ordination and co-operation with other international organizations is of the utmost importance. In particular, we seek even closer co-operation with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Central Asia, Ms. Natalia Gherman, and the EU Liaison Office in Turkmenistan, headed by Mr. Lubomir Frebort. I warmly welcome their participation in OSCE events in Ashgabat this week.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I once again thank Minister Meredov for hosting us here today to look back at two decades of successful partnership and mutually beneficial co-operation. I also thank Ambassador Natalya Drozd and her dedicated team for organizing this conference and many years of unwavering service to the OSCE and OSCE-Turkmenistan co-operation.

Let us be proud of what we have achieved together over the past twenty years and look to our joint future with confidence and in the true spirit of a durable and effective partnership.

Thank you.