



ADDRESS

**by Dimitrij Rupel, Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE,
at the United Nations States Commission on Human Rights
Geneva, 15th March 2005**

Mr Chairman,
Madam High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to have the opportunity to address the Commission on Human Rights in my capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe. I would like to congratulate you, Mr Chairman, and other members of the Bureau on your election and wish you wisdom and strength in performing this challenging task.

Allow me also to welcome the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Arbour, to her first session of the Commission and convey my assurances of our support in her work.

Mr Chairman,

In the OSCE context, the human dimension, which stands for the protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, is a common goal, touching upon all aspects of our work. The OSCE task is to monitor the implementation of commonly agreed standards, and to assist States in strengthening the fabric of civil society based on the protection of human rights. Peer review, the work of our three institutions – the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of Media, and field missions are the mechanisms we use in these activities.

All States have a vested interest in each other's security. As was emphasized by the participating States in the Moscow Document of 1991, issues relating to human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law are of international concern. They – I quote – "categorically and irrevocably declare that commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the [O]SCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned." That is why participating States act co-operatively with the State concerned to ensure that the rule of law is upheld.

Mr Chairman,

This approach is evident in our growing determination to stamp out intolerance and discrimination. Last year, the OSCE held three major events: on combating anti-Semitism; on tolerance and fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination; and on promoting tolerance and media freedom on the Internet. As a follow up, three Personal Representatives have been appointed to promote greater tolerance and combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

Co-operation in this field is vital. I recall paragraph 15 of the Decision on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination taken at the Maastricht Ministerial Council, stating that the OSCE should intensify its co-operation with relevant organizations such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union, as well as with civil society and relevant NGOs to promote tolerance and non-discrimination. Meetings like this are a good opportunity for us to assess to what extent we have achieved this objective and what remains to be attained.

In order for the basic human rights principles to take root in our societies over the long term, we need to raise awareness among young people. It is for this reason that Slovenia's Chairmanship of the OSCE will devote special attention to human rights education.

Mr Chairman,

The respect for basic human rights is also a factor in the economic and environmental dimension. The inter-linkage is best demonstrated in the prevailing priority given to the questions of migration and integration. Efforts should be invested into the gradual creation of an environment that would facilitate adaptation to the increasing cultural diversity and the integration of migrants.

In the political-military dimension, the OSCE stresses the importance of maintaining the basic principles of human rights when confronting security challenges. It also subscribes to the view that societies and inter-state relations based on the rule of law and the protection of human rights will be less prone to instability. The OSCE has developed a Code of Conduct on political-military aspects of security that sets norms for the conduct of armed forces in democratic societies.

The OSCE is developing its policing capacities designed to improve the ability of participating States to address threats posed by criminal activity and to assist them in upholding the rule of law.

In its anti-terrorism work the OSCE operates closely with the relevant UN institutions in implementing UN resolutions designed to assist States in upholding the rule of law as a basis of their counter-terrorism legislation.

Our work on combating trafficking in human beings is very much geared towards strengthening the ability of States for investigation, law enforcement and prosecution of this heinous crime.

A number of our field operations carry out capacity-building projects designed to assist the host governments in their efforts to guarantee basic human rights standards and to strengthen the rule of law.

Mr Chairman,

There is currently a lively debate in the OSCE about reforming the Organization. One of the issues that triggered this debate is the perception of some States that the OSCE uses double standards, particularly in relation to the human dimension. Some hold the view that one group of countries is applying different criteria to others as to themselves. This situation is especially pronounced when it comes to the OSCE election monitoring.

It is clear that we have to address – and either take into account or rebut – the points made by some OSCE States. At the same time, reform should not be an excuse to roll back existing standards. This is a point on which we must be very clear. Human rights are non-negotiable.

In short, human rights, democratization and the rule of law are at the heart of the OSCE's work. The OSCE's *acquis* is well-developed, as are its mechanisms for monitoring the implementation and assisting States in living up to their commitments.

Mr Chairman,

This year we mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act – a historic document embodying the key link between security and human rights, which has been vastly instrumental in inspiring human rights activists living under the yoke of communism. The principles expressed in the Act are not history. They are the keystones of how governments should behave towards their people and how States should inter-act.

Principle seven of the Helsinki Decalogue reads, “participating States recognize the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for which is an essential factor for the peace, justice and well-being necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and co-operation among themselves as among all States”. This is what should guide us in our daily work.

Mr Chairman,

I would like to present some thoughts as a representative of the Government of Slovenia.

Slovenia advocates the promotion of and respect for human rights, and supports the activities of the Commission on Human Rights and its mechanisms. We place high importance on the strengthening of the Office of High Commissioner on Human Rights also by increasing the budget. The Office plays a vital role in realizing the vision of a world in which the human rights of all are fully respected and enjoyed in conditions of global peace. The strengthening of the OHCHR is also one of the main recommendations of the High Level Panel Report on Global Threats, Challenges and Change.

Slovenia welcomes the fact that human rights dimension appears prominently in the recommendations – especially in the one on close co-operation between the High Commissioner on Human Rights and the Security Council. While approving the increased sensitivity of the Security Council to the occurrence of gross human rights violations, we firmly believe that its attention should likewise be paid to chronic violations, which are not always in the media spotlights. We hope that the process leading to the September summit in New York will start a new era of the active implementation of human rights standards and result in an overall increase in the efficiency of the human rights system within the United Nations.

Mr Chairman,

In the last decades, the UN and this Commission have developed an extensive corpus of human rights law. We now feel it is time to take a step forward from declaratory, normative phase to an implementation era. In this sense I would like to express support to the UN Action 2 Programme aiming to strengthen national protection systems. This process will in the long term raise the protection of and respect for human rights of individuals to a higher

level, and we, Mr Chairman, profoundly consider this to be the foundation of sustainable peace and development.

Mr Chairman,

Slovenia has always been committed to the aims and principles of the UN Charter and has played a distinctive role in the sphere of human rights, which has been a central concern of our foreign policy. We have contributed our share in improving humanitarian situations in post-conflict areas, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, East Timor and Afghanistan.

In this process we have devoted particular attention to the most vulnerable among those suffering in conflict regions – the children. We are proud to say that our programmes of psychosocial rehabilitation developed by TOGETHER (Regional Center for the Psychosocial Well-being of Children) have by now made a difference in the lives of more than 200,000 children from regions in conflict. Another area where we have done groundbreaking work is the promotion of mine-action in the regions of South Eastern Europe and the Caucasus through the activities of the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance.

In its striving to contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights worldwide, Slovenia has decided to take its commitment one step further and put forward its candidacy for membership of the Commission on Human Rights for the 2008 to 2010 period. We would consider it a particular privilege to be granted the honour to serve this distinguished body in the capacity of a member.

Thank you for your attention.