



ADDRESS

**by Samuel Žbogar, Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to the U.S.
at the "Confidence- and Security Building Measures Forum"
of the Organisation of the American States,
Washington D.C., 26 April 2005**

OSCE - European Experience in confidence and security building measures

Dear Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to thank you for inviting the representative of the OSCE today to address your august body. It is an honour for me as the ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to the United States and Permanent Observer of Slovenia to the Organization of American States to address you in the name of the Chairman in Office.

As you are aware the Chairmanship rotates annually, and the post of the Chairman-in-Office is held by the Foreign Minister of a participating State. The Chairmanship of the OSCE for the year 2005 is held by my country, Slovenia.

I want to commend your initiative to exchange experiences among different regional organizations regarding conflict prevention and confidence and security building measures. No region is an island. In our inter-dependent world, what happens on one continent or in one sub-region can affect us all. We should therefore share expertise, or to use OSCE language, best practices to help build a safer world.

About the OSCE

With 55 States drawn from Europe, Central Asia and North America, the OSCE is the world's largest regional security organization, bringing comprehensive and co-operative security to a region that stretches from Vancouver to Vladivostok. It was established in the time of Cold war in Europe with the prime aim to develop confidence and security building measures and accelerate disarmament in Europe. Today it offers a forum for political negotiations and decision-making in the fields of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-

conflict rehabilitation. And it puts the political will of the participating States into practice through its unique network of field missions.

2005 is an anniversary year for the OSCE. We are marking thirty years since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, which was so crucial for linking security with economic issues and human rights, and for promoting confidence and security in Europe during the Cold war. We are also celebrating fifteen years since the signing of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, which marked the end of the Cold War and set down building blocks for a security architecture that has been so important for the process of European integration and post-Communist transition. The organization is an important part of the European security network.

2005 is also the year of reform, revitalization and rebalance for the OSCE. EU and NATO enlargements have changed the institutional set-up in Europe, while other changes - such as integration, globalization, and new security threats - have altered the agenda. Because of the speed and depth of these changes, it is no wonder that so many organizations, including OSCE are going through a reform process. If we fail to keep up to speed in this changing world, we will soon become irrelevant.

Comprehensive approach to security

The OSCE approach to security goes well beyond military security and confidence and security building measures as defined in its Vienna Document 1999. Similar to OAS measures, the Vienna document provides for annual exchanges of military information, defense planning, mechanisms for consultation for risk reduction, regular contacts, visits and observations and annual implementation assessment meeting. Through regular exchange of military information and confidence-building measures, the OSCE aims to foster transparency and build trust among participating States. With initiatives, workshops and training projects, it tries to dispel deep-rooted mistrust, to renew civil dialogue and to encourage the spirit of co-operation. Organization endeavoured to reduce conventional forces in Europe and assist countries in destroying surplus weapons and ammunition. The Forum for Security Co-operation meets weekly in Vienna to discuss and make decisions regarding military aspects of security in the OSCE area, in particular confidence- and security-building measures.

The OSCE is however much broader. It conducts a wide range of activities beyond just military security. They relate to all three dimensions of security - the human (comprising human rights, democratization, and rule of law), the politico-military and the economic-environmental. The

philosophy is that security goes beyond military security and that the various elements that make up peaceful, stable, and democratic societies are inter-linked.

The prevention of conflicts

The OSCE works to prevent conflicts from arising and to facilitate lasting comprehensive political settlements for existing conflicts. It also helps with the process of rehabilitation in post-conflict areas. With its institutions and information network, the OSCE closely monitors tensions that could develop into a conflict within the OSCE area and takes "early action" at the earliest possible stage.

The key is to prevent conflicts from arising through effective action on the basis of early warning. And it is vital to provide States with the necessary resources and support not only to keep the peace, but to sustain it over the long term.

As part of its democratization activities and broad security agenda, the OSCE carries out election assistance projects in the lead-up to or following elections. In recognition of the fact that democratic elections form the basis for the legitimacy of government, the OSCE observes elections throughout the participating States. It also conducts technical-assistance projects to improve the legislative and administrative framework for elections in specific countries. Over the past 15 years, the organization has developed an observation methodology that is at the forefront of international efforts in this field. In recent years, the OSCE has published a number of handbooks on election-related topics, including domestic observer groups and the participation of women in the electoral process.

OSCE institutions for security

The OSCE has unique institutions with strong mandates dealing with national minorities, freedom of the media, and democratic institutions and human rights. The OSCE has also developed capabilities to deal with new threats to security including anti-trafficking, combating intolerance, counter-terrorism, border management and policing. The OSCE is something of a stealth organization. It pursues quiet diplomacy and co-operative security.

The Organization employs about 3,000 staff in 17 missions and field operations located in South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. They work 'on the ground' to facilitate political processes, prevent or settle conflicts, and promote civil society and the rule of law, as well as promote confidence and security building measures.

With six field missions in South-Eastern Europe, the OSCE plays a key role in the fields of democratization, human rights, institution building and media development. The OSCE activities in Eastern Europe focus on Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova on topics such as election monitoring, rule of law, conflict-resolution and the fight against trafficking. The OSCE supports the Caucasus states Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia in the areas of economic and environmental development, conflict resolution and democratization. Participating States in Central Asia - Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan - are assisted by the OSCE with political and economic reform. OSCE activities in Western Europe include preventative diplomacy, partnering with organizations, institutions and NGOs for security and co-operation, election monitoring, media affairs, gender issues and the protection of national minorities and combating intolerance.

To conclude

We are faced with new security threats that include economic, social, and political tensions, inter- and intra-state conflicts, terrorism, organized crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and environmental instability. International organisations are in the process of re-tooling themselves to better adapt to combating these challenges.

Due to the evolving and continuously changing nature of security challenges the OSCE is also re-tooling itself and adapting to the new situation. To this end, the OSCE adopted - back in 2003 - the Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century and has been implementing it ever since. The strategy includes strengthening of our counter-terrorism capabilities, a new focus on trafficking and organized crime, enhancement of our policing work, high profile activities to combat discrimination and intolerance, and the development of a border management concept. Renewed emphasis is being placed on the OSCE political-military dimension, for example in small arms and light weapons and the security of surplus materials including ammunition stockpiles, where OSCE is taking concrete steps to provide appropriate help to participating States. We are also taking a more strategic approach to the economic and environmental aspects of security.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for initiating this exchange between organizations on security and lessons learned. We are looking forward to continuing this cooperation.