



ADDRESS

**by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Dr Dimitrij Rupel
at the OSCE Troika Meeting with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation,
4 December 2005**

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to the OSCE Ministerial Troika Meeting with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

Since the Mediterranean dimension has been part of the OSCE since its very beginning, this year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the OSCE-Mediterranean partnership.

I believe that our co-operation this year has demonstrated that our relations are becoming closer and stronger. Our dialogue and joint activities are becoming increasingly focused on practical co-operation on issues of joint concern such as migration and counter terrorism. And the OSCE has demonstrated its willingness and ability to assist in providing know-how in areas such as confidence- and security- building measures and elections.

In 2005, much important work has been conducted under Belgium's able leadership of the Contact Group. I will turn over the floor in a moment to my Belgian colleague, Senator Pierre Chevalier, for a brief presentation of the priorities and achievements of the Contact Group in 2005.

I would first briefly like to highlight some of the main areas of co-operation from this past year.

Firstly, I – like others – was impressed by the joint contributions made by the Partners to the work of the Panel of Eminent Persons on Strengthening the OSCE and at the high-level consultations on OSCE reform last September. The process of strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE will continue into 2006 and I urge you to continue to play an active role.

Secondly, I was pleased to see the exercise hosted by Belgium last July that demonstrated how the Treaty on Open Skies works in practice to enhance openness and transparency among participating States. I hope this type of hands on initiative can be repeated in other areas in the future.

Thirdly, I welcome the active participation of Mediterranean Partners in all five major OSCE conferences on counter terrorism that were held this year. Your participation has benefited the OSCE community by providing expertise and an informed perspective to a threat that affects us all.

Similarly I would like to acknowledge your participation and interest in the OSCE's work on tolerance and non-discrimination, including dialogue with the Personal Representatives.

While the Palestinian Authority is not a Partner for Co-operation, I believe that the work that the OSCE did to assist them in their elections at the beginning of this year can be seen as successful element of the OSCE's engagement in the Mediterranean.

Slovenia chose migration and integration as one of the main themes for its Chairmanship because we see it as one of the OSCE area's greatest challenges. It is a classic comprehensive security issue, touching on border security and management, tolerance and non-discrimination, national minorities, trafficking, and the economic and environmental dimension. As was discussed at this year's Economic Forum, migration and integration are complex and contentious issues which affect security, social cohesion, human rights and economic development for the sending countries and the countries of destination alike, as recent events have so grimly reminded us.

I was particularly pleased, therefore, at Morocco's kind offer to host the 2005 Mediterranean Seminar in Rabat, and to focus on the theme of migration and integration. I was even more pleased at the level of discussion which provided all of us important food-for-thought on how to tackle such a topical issue together. I hope that we will be able to follow up, not least with a Ministerial Council decision on migration. I also suggest that the themes of integration and migration remain a priority for the Contact Group next year.

It is important that ownership of the partnership process is being evenly shared. I hope here in Ljubljana we can reach a consensus on an idea proposed by the Secretary General in Rabat, namely that from now on Mediterranean Partners will take turns to host the Seminar.

I also fully support the Secretary General's proposal in Rabat to establish a Partnership Fund. As you know, I am a strong proponent of out-of-area activities. Such a fund would allow us to kick-start this process and embark on a number of mutually beneficial activities.

I encourage all of you today to come forward with your own proposals for concrete activities that could be conducted in your own country, in particular related to migration and integration, anti-terrorism or promoting inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue.

Thank you.