



STATEMENT

by **Dimitrij Rupel, Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE,**
at the United States Commission on Security and Co-operation in Europe
Washington D.C., 8 March 2005

Senator Brownback, Congressman Smith,
Distinguished Members of the US Congress and the Helsinki Commission,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to address this hearing.

The work of the Helsinki Commission has been a vital element of the CSCE process and for keeping the spotlight on the link between human rights and security. You also play a key role in raising awareness of the OSCE in the United States. Your work is vital, **more vital today, perhaps, than ever.**

The OSCE: Under Attack in an Anniversary Year

The OSCE is under attack. Some critics – even heads of State – are questioning its relevance, its way of implementing decisions, its approach to election monitoring, and accusing it of double standards.

Russia in particular is outspoken – although not alone – in its criticisms. As a result the mandate of the border monitoring operation in Georgia was not extended at the end of last year, there was no consensus on a common Declaration at the Ministerial Council at Sofia in December (for the second year in a row). We still do not have a 2005 budget, and there is no agreement on scales of contribution.

Is the OSCE in crisis? Well, the situation is not ideal. But perhaps this is an opportunity to get some things out in the open that have been festering for awhile.

Not everyone will agree with the criticism of the Russian Federation and some members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, but **their views should not be ignored or dismissed**. I personally do not believe that the OSCE practices double standards. But we have to address the perception among some countries that it does, that countries west of Vienna are teachers with a license to lecture the “pupils” East of Vienna. That is not to say that we should lower our standards or erode our common principles, but we have to maintain a co-operative spirit.

I therefore welcome the debate on strengthening the OSCE. I have appointed a Panel of Eminent Persons to review the effectiveness of the Organization and provide strategic vision for the OSCE in the future. Their recommendations will come out at the end of June. There is also a Working Group on Reform and a Group looking at improving the functioning and effectiveness of OSCE field operations.

At the Sofia Ministerial Council, a decision was taken that clarifies and strengthens the role of the Secretary General. We are currently in the process of selecting a new Secretary General to succeed Jan Kubis, and I hope to make that appointment in the spring.

Since the United States, particularly this Commission, is so supportive of the OSCE, I urge you to ensure that America’s commitment is made clear at the highest level. I spoke with Secretary of State Rice yesterday and said how useful it was for her and the President to lay out so clearly during their recent visits to Europe the importance of EU-US relations and the vision that the United States has for NATO. The same needs to be done for the OSCE. **The future of this Organization and what it stands for should not be taken for granted.**

I am concerned that in this year when we should be celebrating thirty years since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act and fifteen years since the Charter of Paris **we are hearing echoes of Cold War rhetoric**. At a time when we should be celebrating the OSCE’s good work in building security through co-operation, it appears that the common ground on which we stand may be shrinking. We must avoid the re-opening of divisions in Europe and avoid any back-sliding of progress that has been made in recent years. The OSCE is absolutely instrumental in that process.

The **OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Annual Session** that will take place here in Washington in July will be a good opportunity to raise the OSCE’s profile and to re-affirm its importance. I

urge this Commission to lend its backing to that event. If you can encourage senior members of the executive branch to participate, so much the better.

I know that I am preaching to the converted here when I underline the importance of the OSCE as a vital means of promoting security through co-operation in the region from Vancouver to Vladivostock.

Its **comprehensive approach to security** is more valid than ever, linking human rights, socio-economic and environmental issues, and the political military dimension. Security is so much more than “hard” security, and the OSCE demonstrates why and how situations need to be looked at holistically.

The OSCE is an **effective multi-lateral forum** – essential for bringing States together and seeking common solutions to common problems. This is vital in our inter-dependent world where threats to security defy national boundaries and insecurity in one part of the world can have an effect on us all.

Conflict Prevention, Peace Building and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation

The OSCE is geared to **preventing conflict**, and to **post-conflict rehabilitation**.

In **Moldova** the situation concerning Transdnistria remains frozen, but I am hopeful that the recent developments in Ukraine and the conclusion of elections in Moldova – which the OSCE has closely monitored – will usher in a new opportunity to kick-start the settlement process. I intend to travel to Moldova next week.

In **Georgia**, we remain the lead Organization for seeking a settlement to the conflict in South Ossetia and could do more with the UN in Abkhazia concerning the protection and promotion of human rights. We remain engaged with the Georgian authorities to assist them in their process of democratization. It is disappointing that our successful border monitoring operation was not extended, but we will seek to answer Georgia’s request for training border guards.

Concerning **Nagorno-Karabakh**, the Minsk process is back on track through high-level discussions between the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Recently a fact-finding

mission under OSCE auspices visited the occupied territories of Azerbaijan to clarify the situation on the ground.

Of course, much depends on the continued democratization in both countries – a process that the OSCE actively supports. For that reason we were alarmed by the recent murder of Azeri journalist Elmar Huseynov. This is the latest example of censorship by killing which, like the case of Georgiy Gongadze in Ukraine in 2000, is a despicable practice and one which is a serious threat to freedom of the media.

Belarus has a clear democracy deficit. The leadership seems to be pushing itself into further isolation and the OSCE is one of its few remaining links with the international community. The position of the United States is clear through the Belarus Democracy Act and Secretary of State's description of Belarus as "an outpost of tyranny". Given the fact that the OSCE is a consensus-based inter-governmental organization I must be more cautious. But I can say that we have expressed our concerns about the clamp down on civil society, the rule of law, and human rights. And we will continue to work with the Belarusian authorities to ensure respect for OSCE commitments. I plan to visit Minsk in the next few months.

This is an important year for **Kosovo** where the OSCE is a major player. I recently visited Pristina and Belgrade and emphasized the OSCE's commitment to a peaceful and sustainable settlement in a way that ensures representative government and the protection and promotion of human rights, particularly the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. We also must consider the socio-economic angle. Unemployment, particularly among young people, is running at more than 50%. This is not sustainable and is a dangerous ingredient in the cocktail of political insecurity and ethnic mistrust. There is still plenty of work to do and some tough decisions to make - for the international community, countries of the region and first and foremost, all people living in Kosovo. The international community, including the OSCE, needs to be engaged and to move forward the comprehensive review of standards in order to resolve one of Europe's most crucial security issues.

In **South Eastern Europe** as a whole things are definitely going in the right direction. The pull of the EU and the support of NATO, the United States and the Stability Pact, among others, have been important for stabilizing the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. But the shoots of democracy are still frail, and they need steady and

long-term support. For its part the OSCE – particularly through its Missions – is continuing its important work in a range of areas – supporting capacity building and inter-state co-operation on war crimes proceedings; protecting minority rights and strengthening inter-ethnic integration; refugee return; police training; assisting with legal reform; border management; as well as elections.

The OSCE is one of the few international organizations that is present and active across **Central Asia**. I recently visited Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and will visit the rest of the region in mid-April. I believe that this region deserves special attention, which is why I have appointed former Slovenian Prime Minister Alojz Peterle, to be my Personal Representative to Central Asia to augment the work of OSCE Centres and Institutions. Our work in Central Asia is very much designed to support the regimes in their processes of democratization. We are also paying special attention to migration, human rights education, and border management. Elections are also a high priority. For example the OSCE has recently monitored elections in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Some States in the region may not be reforming as quickly as many of us would like. But I believe that it is important to remain constructively engaged, and to offer a hand of support rather than only pointing fingers. While it is important to promote regional co-operation – which is badly lacking – we must also be careful to look at the individual situations in each country.

The situation in Central Asia can not be considered without looking at the impact of developments in neighbouring **Afghanistan**. Just as instability in Afghanistan had a dangerous effect on security in Central Asia, stability and democracy in Afghanistan can reduce the risk of extremism, trafficking and trans-border instability spilling over into the region.

The deployment of an Election Support Team to Afghanistan during the Presidential elections last October was an important step for the OSCE. I believe that we should build on it and respond positively to Foreign Minister Abdullah's invitation to play a similar role in the Parliamentary elections, as well as looking at other ways of increasing co-operation with this important Partner for Co-operation. I believe that fostering closer relations with Mongolia – our newest Partner – can also add to the richness of the OSCE's work in Eurasia.

The Human Dimension

The vital importance of the OSCE's human dimension is not something that I need to convince this Commission of. Election monitoring in Ukraine has again demonstrated the OSCE's leading work in this field. We can all be proud of the excellent work of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in mobilizing more than 1,000 observers over the Christmas period for the re-run of the second round of presidential elections. That being said, **there may be ways that we could further enhance our election monitoring activities.** I am open to the idea of creating a working group on this subject. But I stress that this should build on our existing achievements, not water them down.

Following on from last year's successful and high-profile OSCE conferences on anti-Semitism and racism, xenophobia and discrimination, three Special Representatives have been appointed to enhance the OSCE's work in combating intolerance and discrimination. This is important work.

Coping with New Threats and Challenges

Senator Brownback, in your letter of invitation you asked me to identify emerging internal and external threats to the OSCE region. As you may be aware, at the Maastricht Ministerial Council in December 2003 Ministers agreed on an OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century. In that respect, I believe that we were two years ahead of the UN Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and are already well-equipped and well-positioned to address the threats that were identified.

These threats include:

- inter- and intra-State conflicts;
- terrorism;
- organized crime (including trafficking);
- discrimination and intolerance;
- migration and immigration;
- deepening economic and social disparities and environmental degradation;
- and threats of a politico-military nature.

Allow me to elaborate on a few of these.

The OSCE is doing important work in counter terrorism, promoting the implementation of existing commitments, carrying out concrete projects, and ensuring that counter terrorism efforts respect human rights. This year the OSCE is joining international efforts to strengthen container security.

Borders are, to some extent, losing their significance. At the same time, borders still matter and their security needs to be effectively managed. That is why the OSCE is paying increased attention to border management and security.

In the political military dimension, a proposal has been made for the OSCE to host a seminar on military doctrine. I believe that this is timely, and the OSCE is the ideal place to discuss this topic. Disarmament, arms control and confidence-building measures have long been central elements of the OSCE's work, and the CFE Treaty and Open Skies are within the framework of the OSCE. Bearing in mind the changes in the world order, technology, and warfare, it would be useful to compare notes on contemporary military doctrines.

This year, as a matter of priority, the OSCE's Forum for Security Co-operation will pay significant attention to the implementation of decisions aimed at strengthening the control of participating States over export and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, including MANPADS. The OSCE will also engage in concrete projects designed to assist participating States in improving the management, security and destruction of surpluses of small arms and conventional ammunition stockpiles. As always, the Annual Security Review Conference will be an excellent opportunity to exchange views on these and other political-military issues.

Through the implementation of the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension we are enhancing development, security and stability by, for example, looking at ways to strengthen good governance, ensuring sustainable development, protecting the environment, improving early warning and early action, and reviewing the implementation of commitments.

The OSCE is a leader in anti-trafficking, and this year we are paying special attention to the high risk category of child victims of trafficking.

Policing is an ideal issue for the OSCE. It combines security and human rights. Good policing has a vital role to play in the prevention of conflict, the preservation of social stability during political crises and the post-conflict rehabilitation of societies. Without effective law enforcement, respect for the rule of law and the operation of institutions responsible for upholding it, there can be little likelihood of social, political or economic development in any State.

The OSCE runs police development units in Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia-Montenegro including Kosovo. A police assistance programme has been launched in Kyrgyzstan and others are in preparation in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

No other international organization currently possesses the potential to strengthen long-term law enforcement capacity- and institution-building in the OSCE region in the States most susceptible to crime, corruption and human rights violations. The United States has seconded many excellent police officers to assist us in our work and I am grateful for your support.

External Threats

Unlike 30 years ago when the CSCE was launched, or even 15 years ago when the Charter of Paris was signed, some of the most dangerous threats to security for OSCE States come from outside the OSCE area. The OSCE deals with the symptoms of these threats – trafficking, hate crimes, terrorism. But its role in dealing with the causes is limited.

Nevertheless, we are not powerless. Firstly the OSCE can work to ensure that its commitments are universally applied within the OSCE area. I think, for example, it is healthy when the United States is challenged in the Permanent Council on aspects of the human dimension or when the OSCE sends election monitors to the United States as we did in 2004. This sends an important signal that mature democracies have nothing to hide and are open to learn.

Secondly, we can try to share our values and expertise with others outside the OSCE area. As I mentioned, last autumn we were active in Afghanistan and have been invited to support the forthcoming parliamentary elections. In January we sent an assessment mission to see what help we could offer the Palestinian Authority for elections. Regional and sub-regional organizations from around the world ask us for advice.

In short, we fulfill our role as a regional arrangement of the United Nations and try to share with others the merits of building security through co-operation.

OSCE Vigilant in the Cause of Peace

Members of Congress and the Commission,

This is an exciting year for the OSCE, both because we are marking significant anniversaries and because of the profound changes that the Organization is going through. Europe is in transition. The security architecture is being reconstructed. NATO, the EU, the Council of Europe and the UN are in transition.

Strengthening the OSCE is not an end in itself, it is a necessity based on contemporary realities. We should not become bogged down in a self-obsessed debate on reform. We need to see how the OSCE can most effectively deal with the real challenges of the day that affect the lives of real people.

And that is where you can help. Bring the OSCE to the attention of your constituents and your peers. Use the Parliamentary Assembly and all other channels to make the OSCE stronger.

On August 1 1975 US President Gerald Ford told other heads of state gathered in Helsinki and I quote – “The nations assembled here have kept the general peace in Europe for 30 years. Yet there have been too many narrow escapes from major conflict. There remains, to this day, the urgent issue of how to construct a just and lasting peace for all peoples”.

The world has changed dramatically in the past three decades, but the need to build a lasting peace for all peoples remains the same. As the anti-slavery campaigner Wendell Philips said, the price of peace is eternal vigilance. The OSCE stands on guard for you.

Thank you for your attention.