



ADDRESS

**by OSCE Chairman-in-Office Dr Dimitrij Rupel
at the Roundtable “Contribution of the OSCE in a Changing World”
Vienna, 20 July 2005**

Opening Plenary Session

Ministers,
Director,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for inviting me to open this conference together with you minister Plassnik. As Chairman-In-Office of the OSCE it is always a pleasure for me to be in Vienna, the political and administrative capital of the OSCE. Allow me to take this opportunity to thank Austria for hosting the OSCE for more than ten years now in this beautiful city of Vienna that so perfectly links West and East. Also congratulations to you Director Grusa on your recent appointment as Director of the Diplomatic Academy.

The title of this conference could be read in two ways: it either authorizes us to speak about the role of the OSCE **within the changing world**, stimulating us to discuss, how the present role is, or should be, different from the one in the past. Or, it makes us consider the contribution of the OSCE to the process of **changing the world**. The difference is important, since it places the OSCE either on the margin, or at the center of the changes in the world. OSCE is either an actor or a subject matter of the historical transformation. Contrary to beliefs of many, the CSCE/OSCE has been, since 1975, one of the central actors of the political changes in Europe, America and Asia. The changes that were – in an important way – initiated and carried out by the CSCE/OSCE, have determined later changes in all international organizations including the UN, NATO, OSCE and even the EU – that was temporarily prevented to reform due to the French and Dutch referenda earlier this year.

The CSCE/OSCE changed the world. It brought together all those with an interest in European security to help reduce tensions and to talk about the issues that divided them. This helped the process of détente, and built trust and confidence. It linked human rights and security and was an inspiration for dissidents to hold their leaders to account to the promises that they had made in the famous ten principles of the Final Act.

In short, the CSCE process was a key element in ending the Cold War and making Europe safer and more united.

The CSCE/OSCE produced »external« changes that are producing »internal« changes. The CSCE/OSCE has changed the world that now demands changes of OSCE itself. The CSCE/OSCE has brought together Americans/Canadians, Europeans and the peoples of former Soviet Union. The nations previously divided by WWII and/or the Cold War, (in 1975) agreed on important matters, such as armies, soldiers, police, economy, ecology, elections and other (mostly Western European) democratic standards. We have enjoyed 30 years of positive development – not without hiccups – that has brought the fall of the Berlin Wall, extension of stability and democracy, a rise of economic prosperity and ecological awareness, increase of security and common consciousness of participating in one of the most successful enterprises of modern era.

But in the last thirty years the political balance in Europe has shifted. The EU and NATO have enlarged. Russia is a member of the G8, and has a special relationship with the EU and NATO. There is a great deal of regional co-operation in the Balkans. In short, the OSCE area looks considerably different than it did thirty years ago.

But the momentum of change was hard to stop, and in some places still continues. In the early 1990s the CSCE was strengthened in order to deal with the challenges of achieving stability and assisting the process of post-communist transition, for example preventing conflicts, monitoring elections, capacity building and democratization. That work remains highly relevant in a number of OSCE States.

There are very good reasons why these 55 States need to work together to promote security through co-operation. We need to maintain a baseline of common values. We need to work together to tackle common threats to our security, like terrorism, trafficking, organized crime

and the dangers of extremism and intolerance. There are still conflicts that need to be resolved, and fragile situations that need to be watched and supported. The OSCE has a lot to contribute to a changing world.

The terrorist attacks which hit London two weeks back are a stark reminder of how serious our new challenges are. The Financial Times recently said that the photograph of the four London bombers arriving at the railway station on the morning they attacked the capital's transport system is both "chilling and disconcerting." Indeed, it is also frightening. The fact that they appear to be "home grown" makes this the problem that much worse. As the British Prime Minister said, and I agree with him, this is a struggle against an **"evil ideology."**

It is a battle we cannot lose, and it begins, I should add, with winning the hearts and minds; something the OSCE has been doing for some 30 years now – ever since the signing of the Helsinki Charter. From Vancouver to Vladivostok, the OSCE spans 55 countries joined in their commitment to uphold freedom, humanity, civility, and not least democracy. The OSCE has already managed to turn the tide of repression and suppression in East Europe. Today we are deeply committed to bringing reforms and democracy to Central Asia.

In a way, the 55 nations from Vancouver to Vladivostok belong together. Here, some important questions arise. While in the West, NATO united the »Old« Europe and America, serious problems of integration exist in Europe itself, not to speak about the Caucasus or Central Asia. No organization except the OSCE has managed to connect Americans, Europeans and the post-Soviet nations in Europe and Asia. Maybe, the analysts of the EU should study more closely the success of the OSCE, and then answer the question: why the EU should not enlarge beyond its present Eastern border so far »defended« by Slovenia, Greece, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Latvia Lithuania, Estonia and Finland. Maybe, our EU friends will answer: this is exactly what the OSCE is for.

Today, the OSCE is both underestimated and overestimated. It is at the same time underestimated and overestimated when it is criticized for its work East of Vienna: some think that it should have a stronger integrative role, while others believe that it interferes too much.

Indeed both, the EU and the OSCE, have problems in the »East«. When the »Eastern« nations speak about the need for more integration, they mean joining the EU, taking advantage of the EU programs and funds. They accept the OSCE as the second best offer, and sometimes, they are not attracted to the OSCE at all, because they have reservations about its human dimension.

The real problem is not forum shopping, but further integration of the community today represented by the OSCE. What we need most, is a **Partnership for Prosperity**, based on the supposition that the world from Vancouver to Vladivostok has so much in common that it should work together more effectively. Whether this will mean extension of the EU towards Ukraine and Russia, or beefing up of the OSCE, is less important. The important issue here is how to protect and develop the stabilization and economic progress in places like the Caucasus, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. Without an **enhanced OSCE/Euro-Atlantic partnership**, without a guarantee of an ever closer cooperation and integration – after fulfilling conditions – places like Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia and Montenegro, Turkey or Ukraine... might become targets of dangerous destabilizing influences. EU, NATO and Russian Federation would be confronted with an opposition they hardly need.

I welcome the »Common Purpose« proposals presented by the Panel of Eminent Persons last month in Ljubljana and in Vienna. I am glad to see here today two of the Eminent Persons – Wilhelm Hoeynck and Richard Williamson. The panel wrote a report with recommendations on strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE and has proposed some changes concerning the legal personality of the organization, its charter and clearer rules of procedure; clearer division of labor (between the »baskets« and officials), better transparency and substantial political dialogue. These changes are absolutely necessary, but on top of them, some budgetary and financial aspects of the OSCE will have to be addressed rather urgently. In mid September High Level Consultations are envisaged and we are rather optimistic.

Nobody denies that the OSCE has developed a sophisticated system of election monitoring and assistance with introduction of democratic standards. But since we live in a fast changing and challenging world that threatens to **end the era of positive development of the last 30 years**, we should reach the same standards also in economic and security assistance.

Recently, I have visited Ottawa, London, Washington and Moscow. I listen carefully to the advice of my EU colleagues and of our friends in Eastern, South-Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. I have found that in many places, the OSCE is in a privileged position to assist in the processes that are truly historical. I am referring to a prominent role played by the OSCE in Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo and elsewhere.

Our organization has been invited to perform also in Afghanistan and in Palestine. We have developed relations with Mongolia, South Korea, Thailand and Japan. There are initiatives to establish a new working relationship with China. I think we have to take advantage of these opportunities.

I am glad that Deputy Minister Chizov – whom I met last week in Moscow – is here today to provide the Russian perspective on reforming the OSCE. I also welcome Foreign Minister Rotfeld, who is an old OSCE hand. These speakers, among others, should be able to give you clear insights into the dynamic process that the OSCE is currently going through. I will listen with interest to the debate today because identifying the contribution of the OSCE in a changing world will be one of the main themes of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Ljubljana which I will host at the beginning of December.

These are exciting times, as we look back at a rich history of the Helsinki process, and forward to the OSCE's future role in building a safer Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security space. Thank you again for inviting me here. I look forward to Foreign Minister Rotfeld's speech and to the Panel discussion.

Thank you.