



ADDRESS

**by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Dr Dimitrij Rupel
at the OSCE Troika Meeting with the Asian 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 Asian Partners for Co-operation.

In 2005, the OSCE participating States and the Asian Partners have jointly exerted considerable efforts to give new impetus to our relations.

In this year when the focus has been on strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE, I am glad to say that we have strengthened the bonds of partnership between the OSCE and its Asian neighbours. I hope that this will be adequately reflected in the documents that will be discussed over the next two days.

In 2005, the Contact Group was ably led by Bulgaria. Mr Todor Churov, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, will be taking the lead with a brief presentation of the priorities and achievements of the Group this year.

I would like to highlight a few examples that demonstrate the excellent work undertaken this year.

Firstly, I would like to mention the second successful deployment of an OSCE Election Support Team (EST) to last September's parliamentary elections in Afghanistan. The team was tasked to analyze the electoral process and prepare a set of recommendations to the Afghan government, with a view to enhancing the conduct of future elections and improving Afghanistan's legal framework and procedures.

The decision by the Permanent Council on the EST underscores the importance of democratic elections for fostering democracy and human rights and furthering stability in Afghanistan. Contributing to the stabilization of Afghanistan is first and foremost a moral duty and an act of friendship by the OSCE, but it is also a call of necessity, to contribute to international efforts to combat terrorism and therefore to international peace and stability. The Slovenian Chairmanship, and the OSCE as a whole, were ready to assist the democratic Government of Afghanistan in accomplishing this important step which marked the completion of the tasks set by the Bonn Conference.

As the incoming Chair of the Asian Contact Group in 2006, Slovenia remains committed to facilitating and promoting further interaction with Afghanistan as well as with other Asian partners on concrete initiatives of common concerns.

Secondly I would like to recall the excellent OSCE-Korea Conference held in Seoul in April, which focused on new security threats and a new security paradigm.

The conference was the third such occasion in which we gathered in Seoul for an OSCE event. This is a tribute to Korea's active role as an OSCE Partner for Co-operation. I am also pleased that Foreign Minister, Ban Ki-moon, of the Republic of Korea could join us here in Ljubljana. Minister, welcome. I hope that the historic experience of the CSCE and the commitments and tools of the OSCE can provide you with inspiration for building security and co-operation on the Korean peninsula, and promoting regional security in the Asia-Pacific. Who knows, perhaps one day we will meet in a conference on security and co-operation in Asia.

At the Seoul meeting there were several calls for an increased interaction between the OSCE and the ARF. I fully subscribe to this view, and I can promise you that in 2006 Slovenia, as Chair of the Asian Contact Group, will ensure that such ideas will be followed up.

In June, our Thai friends kindly hosted a conference on sharing experiences in combating trafficking in human beings: opportunities for co-operation. Trafficking is an issue that knows no boundaries and is precisely the type of threat that should be the focus of our dialogue.

Since the beginning of the CSCE process thirty years ago, it has always been stressed that participating States regard their security in the context of the wider world. Partnership is therefore a

core element of the OSCE. After all, the OSCE region is not an island. In our inter-dependent world, what happens on one continent or in one sub-region can affect us all. I therefore welcome such opportunities to share expertise and best practices to help build a safer world.

It is Slovenia's intention to continue to ensure that the work of the Contact Group for 2006 continues to be focussed on issues of common concern and that the discussion is as focussed and as targeted as possible. I also intend to continue to promote participation by the Asian Partners in the main events in the OSCE calendar, such as the ASRC, the Economic Forum and the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, as well as, naturally, the annual OSCE conference in an Asian Partner State, which next year will be kindly hosted by Thailand.

This past year key OSCE events have benefited from the presence and input of experts from Asian Partners' capitals. This is a trend that needs to continue for our mutual benefit.

Thank you.