



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Remarks at the Joint Session of the Three General Committees

Winter PA Session

Secretary General Thomas Greminger

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Mr. Chairperson, dear George,
Undersecretary of State Amendola,
Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for inviting me to address this distinguished meeting. I appreciate any chance to speak with the Parliamentary Assembly. This time I attach special importance to our interaction because I would like to use this opportunity to share with you some of my views on making the OSCE “fit for purpose”.

Last week, I presented a non-paper to participating States on some suggestions for reform. My motivation is to strengthen the OSCE, adapt it to changing times, and to make it more responsive to the needs of participating States.

You may ask, why now?

First, the political climate. The OSCE is needed more than ever to help states cope with the challenges of change, and to foster cooperation at a time of deep distrust and dangerous unpredictability.

Second, the financial situation. Times are tough. Resources are tight. We need to ensure maximum effectiveness.

And third, structural conditions. The OSCE has evolved in an organic way over the past 25 years. Its ability to adapt has been one of its strengths. But it has never fully made the transition from Conference to Organization. Nor has there been a sober assessment of its fitness for carrying out the tasks it has been mandated to do.

Therefore, I have identified three priority areas for reform. I call them the “3 Ps”.

- Using the OSCE as a platform for supporting inclusive dialogue and joint action;
- Working towards a positive unifying agenda; and
- Leveraging partnerships.

Allow me to explain each of these three in a bit more depth.

The overriding priority is to support inclusive dialogue and joint action – the first “P”. I stress support because dialogue and action are up to the participating States. But I see a role for the Secretariat in supporting these processes as effectively as possible. The Structured Dialogue is a key example for such a process; or using Security Days – the Secretary General’s informal dialogue platform – in a more strategic way. I would also propose to create more informal spaces for dialogue to generate and test ideas. And I have established a Strategic Policy Support Unit to enhance our ability to provide support to chairmanships and to conceptualize and plan more strategically.

The main output of inclusive dialogue should be a positive unifying agenda – the second “P” that enhances security and cooperation in the OSCE area. Again, I would see the Structured Dialogue as a key process for developing that agenda. But there may be other ways to strengthen a sense of common purpose, and get us pulling more in the same direction.

We are an Organization of relatively modest means, but significant capabilities. I therefore attach great importance to leveraging partnerships – the third “P”. What do I mean by that?

There is scope to strengthen the OSCE’s role and profile as a regional arrangement of the United Nations under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. We should revitalize the Platform for Co-operative Security. We should enhance partnerships with relevant regional and other inter-governmental organizations, including through implementation of practical activities. And we should explore the possibility of opening liaison offices to raise our profile and connect more closely to other multilateral processes.

I would also like us to reach out to new partners, for example development actors, international financial institutions, aid agencies and the private sector, and to adopt a more strategic (and mutually beneficial) approach to our Mediterranean and Asian Partnerships for Co-operation.

And I definitely see greater scope for working with you – the Parliamentary Assembly. Before I move any further, let me say how pleased I am about the state of co-operation between the executive structures of the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly today. A truly cooperative spirit has set in. I would like to thank you all for this. My particular thanks goes to President George Tsereteli and to Secretary General Roberto Montella. I am convinced that we really need this good co-operation to effectively face the challenges of the future.

Together we need to increase awareness of the OSCE in legislative bodies: to generate political will, secure sufficient financial resources, and to ensure implementation of commitments. I believe that Parliamentarians also have a key role to play in rebuilding trust. Trust in politicians and institutions. Trust between states. And trust in the ability of countries to work together – including through the OSCE – to address complex threats and challenges that defy borders.

So that is the purpose of reform.

What about the fitness of the Organization?

I have presented seven possible areas of reform to the Participating States,

After six months in the job, I see the need for the Secretariat to be more responsive to the priorities of participating States.

As a first step, we need to better understand the challenges resulting from the Organization's organic growth over the past two decades. So I have asked the Office of Internal Oversight to carry out a Management Review of the Secretariat to provide me with evidence-based analysis and options to align resources more closely to participating States' priority activities. The Review should also generate recommendations on how to increase the effectiveness, agility and flexibility of the Secretariat, and suggest measures to realize efficiency gains and/or potential savings.

Second, delivering in the field. One of our greatest assets is our field activities. To maintain the OSCE's comparative advantage of delivering in the field, I propose to discuss: how to maximize impact on the ground through existing field operations; how to ensure effective cooperation with host authorities and a sense of ownership, while retaining a necessary degree of freedom of action for our field presences; and how the OSCE can deliver on the ground in the future through new and flexible approaches, including in participating States where there is currently no established field presence, both east and west of Vienna. This topic will be the focus of a Security Days expert roundtable on 27 April.

Third, I think I don't need to convince you that the current budget process is far from ideal and requires reform. For some time the Parliamentary Assembly has been calling for greater accountability and transparency.

I suggest that the budget should be aligned more closely with the political and operational priorities of participating States, and place increased focus on measurable results. I intend to introduce a number of reform proposals that would include the introduction of: a multi-year strategic planning process; biennial budgeting; and a more methodological approach across the Organization for reprioritization and ensuring efficiencies. Suggestions will also be made to strengthen the extra-budgetary funding mechanism to harmonize it more closely to strategic objectives and to more effectively leverage partnerships.

Our staff is our greatest resource. So the fourth part of my fitness plan is to ensure that we continue to attract and retain the best people. To this end, three areas will be the priority for reform of human resources. First, I will push hard for gender parity. Second, enhancements of the secondment system will be proposed. Third, further steps will be taken to explore possibilities to modernize the OSCE contract policy, preserving the non-career nature of the OSCE while drawing lessons from best practices in similar, non-career international organizations.

Fifth, I believe that further steps are needed to bring women and youth into the mainstream of our work. Not only will I aim for gender equality, we will promote the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and the 2004 OSCE Gender Action Plan. Youth issues and perspectives will also be given greater attention and inclusion.

The sixth point concerns technology. Information technology should be a force for innovation and positive change within the Organization. I think there is a great untapped potential. The

reform process will propose an upgrade of the existing ICT infrastructure and its service delivery approach. A review will also be carried out to see how technology can increase productivity and efficiencies, ensure adequate ICT and information security, and enhance ICT governance and standardization across the OSCE's decentralized system. Lessons will also be drawn from the OSCE's use of technology in the field.

Finally, I think we need to promote ourselves better. Our Organization does not receive the attention it deserves for its contribution to preventing conflict and strengthening stability and security. So as part of the reform process, we should focus more on sharpening and raising the OSCE's profile. To show why the OSCE matters. To tell our story better. And to reach a wider audience.

This is an area where you, the members of the Parliamentary Assembly, can help. I urge you to include specific references to the OSCE in your government work plans, to hold hearings on OSCE-related issues, and to generate support for the Organization's work.

Colleagues,

From experience, I know that reform processes can only be successful if they are consultative and collaborative. We have ideas, but not all the answers. So I count on the engagement and support of participating States, the executive structures, OSCE staff, and the Parliamentary Assembly. Indeed, I hope the very process of discussing reform can help break down some silos within the Organization, and stimulate greater collaboration – and a more strategic and multi-year approach.

I realize that several of the issues that I have raised are not in my hands. Some of the proposed steps would have to be taken by the participating States. A few are my prerogative. Still others will require a combined approach, for example reforms proposed by me that would require the approval of participating States, or initiatives proposed by chairmanships or participating States that would be implemented with the support of executive structures. This can only work if it is a joint venture.

The process will take time. And sequencing will be important. There may be some “quick wins” that can be implemented relatively soon. Some changes can be introduced in the budget proposal for 2019. Other reforms may take several years.

What is vital is to start the process.

Colleagues, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has always been in the vanguard of reform. I therefore look to you as a key ally in making the Organization “fit for purpose”. I hope that I can count on your support.

I look forward to working with you. Thank you for your attention.