



Vienna, 24-25 June 2012

Welcome address by

WOLFGANG SCHÜSSEL

*President of ÖGAVN
former Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria*

Dear Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

An honour and a real pleasure for me to welcome you, together with Secretary General Zannier, to the first OSCE Security Days.

From its inception, Austria has been a fervent advocate of the idea of security and cooperation in Europe. The Organization found its home in Vienna and during my time as Austrian Chancellor, the Secretariat moved to new premises in Wallnerstrasse

Not long ago, you were my guest, Lamberto, at the Austrian Association for Foreign Policy and the United Nations, of which I am the president. Today, I cherish this opportunity to share with you some thoughts about today's world and about the security challenges and options that our wider Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Region faces.

2012 – a “special” year

Let me first of all say that the OSCE Security Days are a very timely initiative, because 2012 is a “special” year.

We live in an era of profound change at a global scale.

The financial crisis and the fear of a world-wide recession have dominated the international agenda and relegated foreign and security policy to the backyard. In particular, the EU is completely absorbed by this fundamental challenge to its monetary union.

There have been important national elections in several countries – the U.S., Russia, France, Italy, Greece and various Arab countries, which have put forward their own national agendas, as a consequence.

Our multilateral institutions have become ineffective and there is a widely-felt need to modernize them. To do so, we as stakeholders need to step back and gain a better understanding of the added value these institutions can provide.

Today, a lack of trust and confidence is prevalent in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region, as the controversy about a missile defence system in Europe shows. We have seen talks about the CFE Treaty (Conventional Forces in Europe) come to an end and implementation of commitments further erode - in particular in the field of free and fair elections, media freedom, the right to assemble and the right to express oneself freely.

Recently, there is talk about not one, but two security communities in the OSCE area (Western and Eastern states coordinated via EU/NATO and CSTO). I am convinced that this will not bring us forward. What we need to develop is a common vision of our Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region. We need to focus on what unites us, not what divides us.

We need a comprehensive approach to security, from external security (defence), internal security (police), the economy, as well as culture and religion, NGOs, civic society and the media in order to cope with the new threats: cyber security, proliferation, weapons of mass destruction and small arms. We face new challenges: in cyber space and the new media, terrorism and proliferation. In this context, let me mention an article which appeared in the Economist on 2 June, 2012, under the headline “Robot ethics: morale and the machine”. The article dealt with the question of how robots become smarter and more widespread, and the consequences thereof. In the end it could be autonomous machines that take life-or-death decisions in unpredictable situations. Another consequence is that it becomes easier to start conflicts – and even more difficult to end them.

It appears strange to me that nobody asks about the cost of war, when conflicts are started. But it becomes very difficult to finance peace keeping operations, mediation etc..

A bridge to the future: Helsinki+40

We need a working plan, a road map and a bridge to the future. Whatever a future world governance may look like, it will also be built on regional ownership. Peace starts with good neighbourhood relations. With its wide membership, broad security concept and emerging partnerships in Asia and in North Africa, the OSCE is a natural forum to build trust and confidence in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space.

In Astana in Dec 2010, we, the participating states, set ourselves the strategic goal of building a wider Security Community. The Ministerial Council in Dublin is the right moment to build a bridge into the future and decide on a roadmap until 2015, 40 years after the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act (“Helsinki +40”). This exercise is not about looking to the past, it’s forward-looking:

One of the central challenges is how the OSCE can contribute to the fight against transnational threats, such as terrorism and trafficking of arms, drugs and human beings. In this context, allow me to congratulate you, Lamberto, for having successfully started a strategic reorientation of the organization in hardly one year. In particular, I would like to commend you for giving the Organisation a new department in the Secretariat to address transnational threats. To give an example, cyber security is an area, where both States and citizens are vulnerable. I very much welcome efforts to develop concrete OSCE confidence-building measures. Wouldn't the OSCE be the right place to develop a code of conduct on State behaviour in cyber space?

The OSCE's politico-military co-operation contributed to create more security, transparency and mutual trust and confidence in the past. A reliable implementation of commitments developed over the years was and is an indispensable precondition for trust and confidence. Unfortunately, some participating States have not been fully complying with their commitments.

The CFE treaty led to concrete limitations and reductions in certain categories of weapons and was a milestone in overcoming the cold war legacy in Europe. The partial suspension of the military information exchange according to the CFE treaty is very unfortunate. It is now time to adapt conventional arms control in Europe to the new requirements of the 21st century. I can only encourage all sides to resume a constructive approach as soon as possible.

A new approach with fresh thoughts overcoming cold war concepts is needed. The modernization of the Confidence and Security building measures of the Vienna Document is one important track to be followed.

In addition to the a renewed commitment to establish a comprehensive conventional arms control regime in Europe we should also continue to engage in reducing the threat stemming from the spread of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, the unsecure stockpiles of conventional ammunitions as well as proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The establishment of regions free from weapons of mass destruction is just the beginning.

We owe it to the people of the OSCE area to make progress in overcoming the still lingering protracted conflicts. Protracted conflicts are the biggest obstacles to the creation of our Security Community. While I see some positive developments on the Transnistrian settlement issue since the resumption of formal 5 + 2 talks at the end of last year (the next talks will be in Vienna on 12 and 13 July 2012), I am very concerned about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: continued violence along the line of contact, the lack of concrete confidence-building measures and the persistence of threatening rhetoric make it impossible for the region to develop its potential for co-operation. I welcome the important role of the OSCE in the Geneva-talks, the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms as well as its support for the issue of water and gas management. However, a lot more concrete work for the benefit of the people could be achieved if the OSCE had again a Mission throughout Georgia.

I am of the opinion that the OSCE and its institutions do not necessarily need new tools and mechanisms to play a more effective role in the conflict cycle, a cycle that stretches from early warning/ prevention via mediation/management/settlement to post-conflict rehabilitation. The focus has to be on how to sharpen existing conflict cycle tools and how to generate the political will to make use of them effectively – the current CiO is well aware of

this. We should all put our trust into the OSCE, its institutions and the respective Chairmanships. They are more than willing to make good use of existing tools on behalf of the wider membership.

The UN SC Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security has been adopted unanimously and thus, should also be included into the follow-up of the Vilnius MC Decision on the conflict cycle. I commend the enhanced efforts of the OSCE Irish Chair and participating States of having three women appointed as OSCE Heads of Missions this year. This shows the commitment to and the significance of UN SC Resolution 1325 within the OSCE. At this point may I remind you that promoting women is budget-neutral.

Some 30 years ago the Human Dimension of the OSCE did not enjoy such importance as today. The broad spectrum of challenges range from freedom of media, right of assembly and free speech, defence of a politically pluralistic democratic society via safety of journalism to challenges of new media like the internet and cyber security. Tolerance and the defence of Human Rights gain ever more importance in an environment of instable economic situations which are often exploited by political or religious extremists.

Let me add here that religion is often misused and instrumentalized. Many conflicts show this pattern, in Syria, Iraq, Nigeria or Myanmar. Often the underlying causes are very different: Autonomy vs. secession, federal vs. central authorities, economic interests and minority issues, mono-lingualism vs. multilingualism and intolerance in general. Religion is a positive force in that it touches the nucleus of human existence. All religions share significant and positive messages about peace and sustainability, respect, dignity and solidarity. It is important to integrate this meaningfulness into such important policy fields as migration and integration, mediation, peace- and confidence-building, development and refugee assistance.

Democracy can only be based on a free society. In this context I want to raise my full support for the priorities of the Irish presidency, which are promoting fundamental freedoms, internet freedom and combatting intolerance. What is the way forward in the third dimension? In the meantime we should be satisfied with small important improvements. Let us concentrate on issues of common appreciation and make concerted efforts to reinvigorate the fundamental importance of the third dimension. I am confident that there are many areas in the Human Dimension where we can all find a common ground.

The OSCE offers its tool box to its partners for co-operation, in particular to those currently in democratic transformation like we see at present in North Africa. The doors to OSCE partnerships should also remain open for Libya, once the government has taken a clear decision on increased co-operation with the OSCE. Respective talks between Libyan Vice-Prime Minister Abushagur and Vice-Chancellor Spindelegger have taken place only in May 2012. With the gradual withdrawal of ISAF forces from Afghanistan the need for stronger OSCE support for a democratic and stable Afghanistan is obvious to me. The MC in Vilnius confirmed this view. While certain activities in this regard can be undertaken in Central Asia, others would require an OSCE role also inside the country. There is also good news: With its application to become the 57th participating State of the OSCE, Mongolia has demonstrated that there is interest in the Organisation and what it can deliver.

With its wide membership and broad security concept, the OSCE should play a decisive role in serving as a true Platform for European Security, where various international organisations active in the Eurasian and Euro-Atlantic area can be connected to our mutual benefit.

The value-added of the OSCE

The comprehensive security concept developed by the OSCE is increasingly popular with international security actors. It has influenced the New Strategic Concept of NATO, as well as the recommendations of the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative (EASI) in its report. There is also interest among our Asian partners for cooperation in such an institutionalized security dialogue à la OSCE. In Vilnius, the Australian Foreign Minister even envisaged an Asian-Pacific version of the Helsinki Final Act.

Indeed, the OSCE has shown its added value many times, that of a swift, flexible actor uniting 56 stakeholders on the basis of its broad security approach:

OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMIK): Only a few weeks ago – and given my experience with the region this is particularly important to me - the OSCE successfully facilitated the Serbian elections in Kosovo. No other organization was in place to fulfil this complex task on such short notice, in only five days. It was also a proof of the high level of acceptance the OSCE enjoys in the region.

Let me say a word here on the Western Balkans: I believe we cannot overestimate the successful role the OSCE with its field missions has played in the Western Balkans. I dare say that it is impossible to imagine the countries of this region further integrate into Europe without the massive contribution of this organization. From an Austrian perspective, the OSCE's role of solving conflicts, together with the European perspective have been, and still are, key parameters in the integration of the Western Balkans. My advice would be to take a prudent approach to reducing OSCE engagement in this region.

A positive outlook

I take note of Russia's announcement to finally implement the new Vienna Document 2011 on confidence- and security-building measures.

I would expect that the parties to the CFE Treaty use the time to prepare for a new momentum, once all elections are over this year.

There is nothing to lose, but a lot to be gained, from a review of the human dimension that makes for a more effective human rights, democracy and rule of law policy of the OSCE.

The same goes for the missing legal personality of the OSCE.

One caveat: don't starve the OSCE to death

The budget of this Organisation is 150 mill. Euro. For the same money, you can buy two top soccer players: Ronaldo (94 mill.) and Torres (53 mill.)! Every week, the USA spend 2,000 mill. Dollar on Afghanistan.

I think it is now up to the participating states to give the institutional and financial backing to the organisation to address the challenges we have identified and to fulfil the ambitions we have been setting to ourselves.

In this regard, allow me to express some caution with regard to the nearly traditional zero nominal growth policy in terms of OSCE budgets. In light of the new and growing tasks I see little scope for credibly addressing at least some of the challenges if we continue with a zero nominal growth strategy followed for now nearly 10 years. Looking soberly at the return on investment you will agree that the OSCE can be regarded as an efficient tool.

A guarantee to succeed? No, as always in life. Do we have a choice? Not either. Politics has always been about drilling thick boards (Max Weber) – with patience, and with endurance. In this respect, I welcome the succession of future Chairs of the OSCE (Ukraine, Switzerland, Serbia), which represents a good mix of the wider Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Security Community and its stakeholders.