



Chairmanship: Greece

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MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION**

Athens Ministerial Council, 1 and 2 December 2009

Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to start my report by thanking the Mediterranean Partners for their excellent contribution to the OSCE in 2009, which was marked by their unfailing engagement and stimulating debate, both in the context of the Mediterranean Contact Group and in the broader activities of the OSCE at the political level.

We have had a very intense year, full of lively debate and new and refreshing ideas. As I have mentioned, full credit goes to the Mediterranean Partners themselves, but also to Greece, which, as holder of the Chairmanship of the OSCE, continued supporting the work of this Group, and Lithuania, which has also started embarking on this adventure with enthusiasm and dedication.

We also commend the efforts of Professor Sotiris Roussos as Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office for the Mediterranean Partners in 2009. His mandate will constitute the basis for further related type of activities and in 2010 we will take on board all the best achievements from this year.

And last but not least, the Secretariat, whose work continues to be the pillar of our dialogue. It has been a pleasure and an honour working with them and I wish them all the best in their respective institutional functions next year.

Work by the Kazakh Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group in 2009 was based on four pillars. First of all, we have made every effort to ensure that we followed the OSCE's three-dimensional approach to security. Secondly, we have made it a point to take initiatives that had relevance to the Mediterranean region and the issues of importance to it. Our third guiding principle was that discussion had to be relevant also to the OSCE participating States. And finally, we believed our role was to be conducive to dialogue and fruitful exchanges of experiences and ideas.

With this in mind, we decided to hold seven meetings of the Mediterranean Contact Group in 2009. The meetings were very interactive and saw discussions and exchanges of ideas on a number of issues, including freedom of the media, action against terrorism, trafficking in human beings, the Alliance of Civilizations, economic and environmental activities, the politico-military dimension, tolerance and non-discrimination and the Union for the Mediterranean. Ideas were also exchanged with the representative in Vienna of the OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly. Regular discussions and consultations were held on the use of the Partnership Fund. In line with previous similar initiatives, Morocco made a presentation on the future of the OSCE Mediterranean partnership.

Additionally, on 11 December, we will have the traditional joint meeting of the Contact Groups, which will give us an opportunity to discuss issues shared by the two Groups. While the agenda still needs to be finalized, also taking into account the outcome of the Athens meeting of the Ministerial Council, it is likely that we will discuss the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security: common challenges and threats, with a view to assessing the potential role of the Partners for Co-operation in the follow-up to the expected Ministerial decision on the future of the Corfu Process. The Partnership Fund may be the second item on the agenda.

The 2009 OSCE Mediterranean Conference will be held in Cairo on 14 and 15 December. It will be the seventh year in a row in which the Conference is hosted by a Mediterranean Partner, the fifth time in total by Egypt. The main theme of the Conference will be: *The Mediterranean Partners and the OSCE: Co-operation Toward Enhanced Security and Stability*. In line with the priorities outlined above, Kazakhstan worked to develop an agenda that touched on all three dimensions and on issues of topical importance. We believe that discussion of the politico-military aspects of security in the OSCE area and the Mediterranean, implications for migration of the current economic and financial crisis, and prospects for OSCE-Mediterranean co-operation is indeed highly relevant and timely. In particular, migration is as much a burning issue for the Mediterranean as tolerance and non-discrimination, as is a discussion on the OSCE's *acquis* in the first dimension, and in particular its CSBM regime.

For the last few years, our annual conferences have seen much enhanced debate, and we have been able to compile long lists of proposals stemming from them. However, the follow-up mechanisms were less developed, partly because the lists of recommendations were so long as to make it impossible for any Chairmanship to follow them in detail. For this reason, this year we decided to streamline the outcome of the conference and place quality above quantity. After the Cairo conference we, as Chair of this Contact Group, plan to highlight the three most important and realistic proposals, which, with the help of the incoming Lithuanian Chairmanship of the Contact Group, will be assigned a high priority for follow-up next year.

I said that migration and tolerance and non-discrimination are arguably the most important issues in our dialogue with the Mediterranean Partners. Indeed, we hear constant reports that manifestations of intolerance, racism and xenophobia are on the rise in many OSCE participating and partner States. We ourselves, as participating States, have recognized the magnitude of this threat, by appointing three personal representatives of the Chairman-in-Office on tolerance matters, and have held a long series of high-level conferences on this subject. Kazakhstan itself is planning a major high-level conference on a holistic approach to tolerance to be held in Astana during its OSCE Chairmanship in 2010.

For this reason, we considered it essential to organize a seminar on tolerance and non-discrimination for the Mediterranean Partners in Astana, in July, on the eve of another event of major importance for this subject, namely, the Third Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, hosted by H. E. Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The seminar was financed through a Kazakh contribution to the Partnership Fund, and touched upon promoting interethnic and interreligious dialogue and protecting the rights of labour migrants. It made a substantial contribution to the elaboration of the human dimension priorities of the OSCE Chairmanship in 2010, including a planned Chairmanship conference on tolerance to be hosted by Kazakhstan next year.

Somewhat linked to tolerance and non-discrimination is the question of media reporting on certain issues and responsible journalism. I will not enter here into the details of the question of balancing the need to safeguard freedom of the media and of expression against the need to avoid fostering a sense of exclusion and marginalization by certain communities, be they minority or migrant ones. But I will stress that this is an issue to which there are no easy solutions. Media self-regulation is one of the most effective answers to the problem. This is certainly what emerged from our seminar held in Vienna in June, organized by the office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, which Kazakhstan supported wholeheartedly. Eleven international experts from the entire OSCE region and from the region of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners presented and discussed various forms of media self-regulation. The event also raised awareness about the essential role that responsible journalism plays in developing independent media. Media professionals explained and intensively debated the merits of self-regulation, including editorial independence, correction of mistakes, complaints and enhancement of quality and professionalism.

Also in the first dimension, a workshop on an integrated approach to supply chain security for the Mediterranean region will be held in Valletta, Malta, just a few days from now. It will bring together public and private experts from OSCE Mediterranean participating States and Partners for Co-operation, building on OSCE commitments on enhancing container security (MC.DEC/9/04 and MC.DEC/6/05). The participants will be senior officials and experts from governments, businesses and industry, as well as relevant international structures, and the intention will be to facilitate dialogue, networking, exchange of experiences and public-private partnerships. The aim is to help gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the supply chain and related security issues, including vulnerabilities and threats. The ultimate goal is to increase our effectiveness in tackling terrorism, while at the same time continuing to facilitate legitimate trade and transport. This is another project that was financed through the Partnership Fund, and to which Kazakhstan contributed.

I have been mentioning the Partnership Fund as the source of financing of many events today. This is the best proof that the participating States were right in considering it a good way to promote a greater engagement of the Partners for Co-operation in the Organization. To continue building on this year's, and last year's, achievements, Kazakhstan has launched a process that hopefully will reap results in both the short and also the medium terms. Earlier, I mentioned the large number of proposals we have identified in the past. Although unmanageable in its entirety, the list of proposals still deserved our due attention. Consequently, together with the Mediterranean Partners, we have now been able to identify three key areas in which we believe our work could be prioritized, with a view to introducing a few targeted and well-thought-out projects. These areas are: the management of water

resources and action to counter desertification; border security and management; and human resources, more specifically creating the opportunity for sponsored experiences in an OSCE executive structure for young professionals (diplomats) from the Mediterranean Partner countries.

With the help of the incoming Lithuanian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group, at this time next year, we will be hearing another enthusiastic report on the use of this important tool.

Thank you.