

**ID @ Borders and the Future of Travel Conference 2019**

Vienna, 11-12 April 2019

**OSCE Secretary General**

*Thomas Greminger*

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

Let me start with this simple question: Why are we here today?

Firstly, we are here because our goal is to help you, the OSCE participating States, to implement UN Security Council Resolution 2396, which requires all UN Member States to collect and use biometrics to disrupt terrorist travel. Terrorists might be able to buy a fake ID, or pretend to be someone else. But it is a lot more difficult to have fake fingerprints. The Resolution calls specifically on Regional Organizations, like the OSCE, to provide technical assistance and capacity building to States in implementation.

Secondly we are here because there is still a large implementation gap when it comes to States' commitments on biometrics. Although some OSCE participating States are already collecting and checking biometric information at the border, many are not, and some have yet to develop a biometric passport.

Thirdly, we are here because even when this biometric data is collected – it often remains in national silos. While there are open questions regarding what

data can be shared, with whom, and using what channel, there are recommended practices that States can follow to ensure they share biometric information responsibly and ethically. All while ensuring we comply with data privacy regulations, international human rights law, and domestic legislation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

These are the reasons for organizing this conference: Preventing the movement of terrorists, building capacities where needed, and encouraging good practices in information sharing. This event can help you turn these promises into action.

Thankfully in the OSCE we are not alone. We have teamed up with the Biometrics Institute to support you.

The Biometrics Institute and the OSCE are a good match, I believe. The OSCE is an inter-governmental organization with 57 participating States and the local expertise to build capacity on the ground. The Institute brings its subject-matter expertise and network of Biometrics professionals.

Our partnership has worked well for the organisation of this conference, and we hope to be able to continue it in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since these are welcoming remarks, I would like to welcome all of you to Vienna and to our OSCE premises at the beautiful Hofburg.

We have 215 participants in total.

This includes representatives from 48 countries. So welcome to all of those representing States and governments!

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to our partners in international organizations – the United Nations, the European Commission, EU-LISA, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, INTERPOL, IOM, and the World Travel and Tourism Council.

Finally I would like to welcome all of the industry representatives. Those representing private companies and airlines – you have experience implementing these systems and your expertise here is invaluable.

State representatives, international organisations, and the private sector – we are all here to do one thing: to support implementation of Resolution 2396.

Dear colleagues,

In order to better support participating States in implementation of Resolution 2396, the OSCE will soon launch an extra-budgetary project on biometrics. I invite all interested participating States to contribute to this new project, and meanwhile to use today's event to better understand what the OSCE can do in this critical topic.

**In summary**, I hope we will use the next two days to: help one another prevent the movement of terrorists; support capacity building where it is required; and promote the sharing of biometric data.

Implementing Resolution 2396 will be a challenge for all of us. However, we cannot stand still and hope that the threats around us will disappear. We must meet the challenge and take these necessary steps.

For those of you that do not know me, I love to cycle. I am also a fan of Albert Einstein. So I'll leave you with one of his quotes that I believe shows us the need to take the necessary steps to meet this challenge: "Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving".

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to our discussions in the next two days.