

**REMARKS BY THE HEAD OF THE OSCE PRESENCE IN ALBANIA
ON BEHALF OF THE OSCE SECRETARY GENERAL
AT 10TH PLENARY SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY
ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN**

High-level debate on
Political developments and perspectives in the Mediterranean
Tirana, 18 February 2016

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,

Thank you, Secretary General Piazzzi, for gathering us here today to discuss challenges and opportunities for Mediterranean co-operation. Let me thank the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean for having invited me to speak on behalf of OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier, who sends you his best wishes. The PAM is creating exactly the kinds of connections and synergies that we need to foster throughout the Euro-Mediterranean region.

1. Present the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership

- The long-standing relationship between the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation goes back to the origins of the Organization and has evolved and matured throughout its history. It was at the 1993 Rome Ministerial Council that **Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia, together with Israel**, requested a closer and more structured relationship with the CSCE, before officially becoming “Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation” in 1995. They were joined by **Jordan** in 1998.
- In 2014, the **Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners** has celebrated its 20th anniversary. Serving as the main venue for regular dialogue with the Partners, it is held on average seven times per year at ambassadorial level and is chaired by the incoming chair of the OSCE (Austria in 2016). Let me use this opportunity to mention that, on 29 February 2016, the **Tunisian National Quartet**, Nobel Prize Laureate, will visit Vienna and address the meeting of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group.
- The year 2015 was another defining moment for the Mediterranean Partnership of the OSCE as the annual **OSCE Mediterranean Conference**, held last October in Jordan, attracted a number of high-level speakers. The event gave the OSCE Mediterranean Chairmanship the attention it deserves and provided an opportunity for a high-level exchange of views, and the generation of ideas and exploration of ways to enhance relations between the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners.
- Today, the OSCE’s dialogue with its Mediterranean Partners is based on a **solid political framework**. Interaction with the Partners takes place in the context of numerous OSCE forums, and covers a range of areas, including security issues. The **Ministerial Declaration**

on Co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners, adopted at the Ministerial Council in Basel in 2014, has charted our way to the next level of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership.

- Over time, the Mediterranean Partnership has become more operational and action-oriented as our priorities have become more closely aligned and our Partners have become more forthright in requesting OSCE co-operation. In a number of areas, the exchange of best practices and capacity building has become particularly important. Almost **20 cooperation projects** are currently being implemented or are ready to be implemented upon availability of extra-budgetary funds, allowing the OSCE Mediterranean Partners to benefit from the experience of the Secretariat and the participating States, in the field of counter-terrorism, environmental issues (water scarcity, land degradation, climate change), energy security, migrations and trafficking of small arms. As for last year, let me mention the conference on “Tackling Emerging Transnational Threats in the Mediterranean Region through Information Sharing and Co-operation” (Monaco, 1-2 June 2015), the regional conference on the outreach of the OSCE Code of Conduct for the Southern Mediterranean Region (Tunisia, 1-3 September 2015), or the familiarization visit of an Egyptian counter-terrorism delegation to the OSCE Secretariat that took place on 28 and 29 April 2015, among many others. Mediterranean Partners were also actively involved in the Security Days event “Building Bridges: Promoting Dialogue to Prevent Radicalization and Violent Extremism”, organized by the Secretary General in May 2015.
- Last year in March, we have also re-launched a programme on **placement of young diplomats** from OSCE Partners for Co-operation. It is a programme with a two-year implementation cycle that gives young diplomats from Partner countries the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the OSCE and its commitments, values and standards, as well as with its practical work to promote their implementation. Three young diplomats from Morocco and Tunisia have already benefitted from this project, between September and December 2015, and two (a Moroccan and an Egyptian colleague) will be placed in the Secretariat between February and May 2016.
- The OSCE has launched a new **track II initiative on the Mediterranean**, under the name of “*New-Med*”. Under this project, a network of researchers and academics with an interest in Euro-Mediterranean security issues has been created. The network focuses on how the OSCE can help tackle regional challenges and promote a discussion on the “OSCE model” and its possible regional relevance. The *New-Med* Network, launched in 2013, came to full fruition in 2015. Events involving academics and researchers from participating States and Mediterranean Partners were organized throughout the year including in Rome, Tunis, London, Malta and Ankara. These activities, which were complemented by several publications, raised the profile of the OSCE Mediterranean partnership in the international think tank community, created additional channels of communication between the OSCE and civil society, and generated ideas on how to strengthen OSCE-Mediterranean co-operation. *New Med* has been actively involved in the organization of the conference on the Helsinki Final Act’s Mediterranean Chapter and the Future of Mediterranean Co-operation, held in Malta on 10 November 2015.
- The OSCE is also exploring possible ways of co-operation with **other International Organizations acting in the Mediterranean region**. As the largest regional organization under the UN Charter, the OSCE can act as the platform for co-operation between other regional, sub-regional, and multilateral organizations in the Mediterranean region. Most of the Mediterranean Partners are members of such organizations. On mediation and preventive

diplomacy, we co-operate with the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Co-operation. The contacts and interaction between the OSCE and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) have increased in 2015, with the Secretary General attending a high-level meeting on intercultural and interreligious dialogue at the UfM headquarters in Barcelona on 23 July 2015, and the UfM Secretary General participating in several OSCE events. With the International Institute on Justice and the Rule of Law (IIJ), based in Malta, co-operation also increased.

- In the longer term, the question of the **boundaries of the Mediterranean Partnership** might arise, as evidenced by the application of Libya in 2013.

2. The OSCE Mediterranean Partnership and current challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean region

- In 2016, the Euro-Mediterranean region is experiencing renewed and heightened tensions, and is increasingly divided by old and new rifts. As the OSCE-Mediterranean Conference in Jordan last year highlighted, these issues are no longer regional issues only. They have become part and parcel of both the OSCE agenda and in fact, very significantly, of the global agenda too.
- The threat of intolerance and radicalization attempts to exploit what still divides us. Our first urgent task is to forge a common, powerful counter-narrative to the divisive messages which are being spread by groups and movements who reject dialogue, tolerance and peaceful coexistence. That was the purpose of the OSCE-wide campaign against violent extremism launched in 2015 by the Serbian Chairmanship and the OSCE Secretary General, which highlights the OSCE's comprehensive approach to preventing terrorism by branding all relevant activities across the Organization with a common slogan: "OSCE United in Countering Violent Extremism". Within a week of launching this campaign, we had already reached more than half a million people on social media. As Parliamentarians you are important opinion-builders in your respective constituencies and beyond, and I would therefore like to encourage you to support the OSCE #UnitedCVE Campaign (unitedcve@osce.org / www.osce.org/unitedcve) and carry our message forward.
- Let me now turn to the issues of **migration** and displacement that keep attracting much public attention and have unfortunately also given rise to controversies both between countries and within our societies
- The ongoing refugee and migration crisis is above all a humanitarian crisis that nobody can passively watch unfolding. Several OSCE Partners for Co-operation and participating States are at the front line of **migration flows in and from the Mediterranean**. Some of them are both sending and receiving countries. Others are important transit countries. Others are among the major recipients of asylum seekers in the world. Several OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, are currently hosting extraordinary numbers of war refugees (Jordan, in particular).
- The **OSCE membership** includes all the transit and destination countries along the main migration routes into Europe and has an ongoing dialogue with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. The OSCE can therefore provide a forum for dialogue, including on the

goals, tools, and impact of on-going convergence and economic **integration processes** which continue to unfold at the sub-regional level and which have an impact on migration governance in the OSCE area.

- In migration as in other fields, our goal is to promote a **comprehensive definition of security**, which spans all three dimensions, and to reject narratives and policies which would overly securitize the response.
- The OSCE has a mandate to tackle key migration-related challenges such as **border management, transnational threats**, and the fight against **human trafficking**. We are also active in the fields, on **tolerance and non-discrimination** issues and of the protection of **human rights** of people on the move, including with a link to the Mediterranean region. For instance, a successful workshop on “*Gender and Labour Migration: contemporary trends in the OSCE area and Mediterranean region*”, has been held in Valletta, in October 2015.
- The OSCE **German Chairmanship** has kept migration as one of its priorities for 2016 and is considering the next steps. The Secretariat is **looking into the OSCE mandate and activities in this field** with a view to identifying areas in which we could add value.
- To stimulate a **forward-looking and pragmatic discussion**, Secretary General Zannier is organising an OSCE **Security Days on migration which will take place in Rome on 4 March**.

Conclusion

- Forty years after the Helsinki Final Act, developments in the Mediterranean are inextricably linked to the security of the OSCE area. The complex and often interrelated challenges affecting the two regions are too great for any single country or region to tackle alone. The current situation requires co-operation and joint action.
- In this regard, we need to further **articulate the added value of our respective organizations** according to their specific vocations and mandates, while **building synergies** among us wherever possible and **creating strong interregional coalitions**.
- Let me end by asking a question: in the coming years, will the Mediterranean Sea be a link between Europe, Africa and the Middle East, or a dividing line? It is up to all of us, and not least up to you, Members of Parliaments, to act so that the region remains a common space of peace and shared prosperity.