



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

International Conference on “Strengthening Peace and Security Co-operation
towards Democracy and Development”
Vienna, 29 April 2015

Secretary General Lamberto Zannier Opening Remarks

Distinguished Colleagues,

Dear Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin with thanking the co-organizers of this important conference: Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, UN University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies and the Organization of American States.

In today’s world, challenges to peace and security are increasingly complex and multi-dimensional. Addressing these threats calls for a comprehensive approach. Regional organizations can play a key role, particularly in conflict prevention and peacebuilding when dealing with insecurity and instability at the local level.

But greater co-operation and coordination between UN and regional organizations is needed. And this should be complemented by enhanced co-operation and dialogue with civil society. The OSCE has long taken this approach. Civil society actors have also increasingly showed their added value in tackling contemporary and emerging threats to security together with national governments and international organizations.

As a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE has developed a good partnership with the UN as well as other regional organizations (e.g. EU, Council of

Europe) both in the field and at the headquarters level. Our response to the crisis in and around Ukraine provides an excellent example. The OSCE has strived for close co-operation and coordination with other organizations in areas ranging from mediation, dialogue facilitation, and protection of minorities, to capacity-building activities, electoral observation and humanitarian assistance. We aim for an efficient division of labor, complementarity and mutual support.

The OSCE also promotes co-operation with civil society organizations, notably through Track II initiatives aimed at tapping into the fresh ideas and thematic expertise of non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and think tanks. The OSCE Security Days conferences, which I have been hosting since 2012, are a unique forum for informal Track II interaction and debate on security challenges and opportunities. The OSCE Academic Network is another important example of the Organization's commitment to foster dialogue and cooperation with civil society actors. And earlier this week the OSCE Secretariat, together with PCU and SMM, hosted here in Vienna another brainstorming meeting on dialogue in Ukraine with the participation of civil society and think tanks, exploring options for increased cooperation. Moreover, at the operational level SMM co-ordinates its field activities with humanitarian organizations on a daily basis.

Today's event is an appropriate follow-up to the OSCE Security Days conference on "The OSCE and Chapter VIII of the UN Charter: Confronting Emerging Security Challenges in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Space" held in May 2014. That conference produced a number of relevant recommendations on how to enhance co-operation between international organizations and civil society. These included the need to increase the OSCE's engagement with civil society, including young people, as a means to better understand all aspects of a crisis and the possible tools to defuse it; and the importance of including all groups involved in a conflict, in particular civil society, in mediation processes.

Today's event offers the possibility to build upon those discussions and recommendations and broaden their scope. Bringing together practitioners and experts from international and regional organizations and civil society is an excellent way to identify good practices and lessons learned on how to enhance co-operation among all these actors, as well as to propose new approaches.

This week I will be travelling to New York to participate in the UNSG's high-level retreat for heads of regional organizations. I will also take part in a high-level thematic debate of the General Assembly on "Strengthening cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations". So today I look forward to getting fresh ideas that I can feed into those discussions.

I wish you a fruitful conference.

Thank you.