



“Economic Cooperation, Environment and Sustainable Development in Eurasia”

Remarks by OSCE PA President George Tsereteli (MP, Georgia)

at the Third Meeting of Speakers of Eurasian Countries’ Parliaments

Antalya, Turkey | 9 October 2018

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Speaker Yildirim,
Speaker Moon,
Chairman Volodin,
Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,

At the onset, let me echo the previous speakers in warmly thanking our Turkish hosts for their outstanding hospitality and for providing this opportunity to revitalize international co-operation and dialogue.

As we meet today in Turkey, we underline a common desire to share more than borders. All of us present today share a vision of a more closely connected continent that spans from Western Europe to Eastern Asia.

This is the vision that has been promoted for over 40 years by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe: building a common Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian community from Vancouver to Vladivostok – free, democratic, common and indivisible, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals.

The OSCE's holistic approach to security – encompassing the politico-military, economic, environmental, and human dimensions – combined with its strong geographical presence in the Euro-Asian, Euro-Atlantic, and Mediterranean spheres makes it a forum unique in the world.

As demonstrated by the OSCE's work in the economic and environmental dimension, in particular through its robust network of field missions, enhanced co-operation on issues such as environmental protection, water management, and cross-border economic projects can be a first step towards building trust.

In Central Asia and in South East Europe for instance, we have seen that it can have positive spill-over effects into the political sphere and promote greater stability and security. This requires constant dialogue, and more importantly, respect of agreed rules and principles.

Excellencies,

Looking all across Eurasia, we can see a continent with immense potential and all the ingredients for success.

For centuries, we witnessed considerable commercial expansion all along the Silk Road spanning from China to Europe, through Central Asia and the Caucasus. Our shared history shows that increased exchanges and strong co-operation are key to the development and success of our countries and our people.

Yet, persistent economic disparities remain and environmental challenges have undermined our development. Conflicts are flaring at every corner of Eurasia. While war rages on Turkey's border and in Ukraine, protracted conflicts in the post-Soviet space have for years destabilized regions and still poses stumbling blocks in reaching our full economic potential.

The size and scope of Eurasia's challenges necessitates closer collaboration and constant communication between your countries and our regional and international partners.

Unfortunately, what we have seen in recent years within the OSCE has been a deterioration of trust to an alarming extent. Fundamental disagreements have eroded dialogue and entrenched conflicts. Commitment to OSCE principles and to international law have been set aside in the cases of Ukraine, of Georgia and in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Unfulfilled agreements have failed to prevent continued human suffering and, in the end, this has made it more difficult to face our joint challenges and work together in the pursuit of economic success.

Fellow parliamentarians,

Against this backdrop, I believe that parliamentary diplomacy has a greater role to play across the continent to foster a climate of mutual understanding and bring creative solutions to our most complex challenges.

Today's meeting is an important opportunity for us, parliamentarians, to exchange ideas and further promote the deeper ties necessary to reinforce international co-operation throughout Eurasia. I also encourage our member and partner countries to carry on with their strong engagement in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. As a unique forum for dialogue, the OSCE PA is ideally placed to help build more bridges between our countries.

As we have faced an erosion of trust between our governments, OSCE parliamentarians have carried on holding our governments accountable, and pushing them to live up to their commitments. We have continued to encourage dialogue and the pursuit of multilateral diplomacy in our region.

After all, it is our responsibility as elected representatives to answer to the expectation of our people, all of whom aspire to living freely, safely, and more prosperously. This is our mission. It must continue to guide our action.

Thank you.