



Draft

**Remarks of President Riccardo Migliori**

Winter Meeting 2013

*The Hofburg // Vienna*

*As prepared for delivery*

Madame Speaker,  
Excellencies,  
Colleagues and friends,

Each year we come here, the site of a former palace, now our place of privilege to have our voice heard clearly at the heart of the OSCE's operation.

Those of you who know me, may know I have a penchant for frankness – something often sorely missing in the diplomatic dialogue of the OSCE. In the last eight months, I felt I had to speak up – for our Assembly; for us, as elected officials, and for the one billion people we represent across our vast region. I do so not for our sake today, but for the OSCE's tomorrow. As we look ahead to that future, today I want to remind us all about where we come from. For whether we are debating changes to our security forces or the new technology affecting media freedom, the plight of refugees or the protection of borders, solutions for the future can be found in the road map signed in our past. The Helsinki Final Act that binds us all together here

At this meeting our committees will be busy debating issues in which the Assembly must work hard in the months to come as we prepare for votes in Istanbul. The depth of your contributions today can lead to strong proposals and concrete action this summer. There is just one recommendation I would like to make: in every action we take, as parliamentarians or OSCE activists, may we build on the lessons and the spirit of Helsinki.

**“The participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all...” Principle 7, Helsinki Final Act.**

Principle 7 also confirms the right of the individual to know. Only where there is a free press are citizens truly free to know about their government. I'm proud of our debate on this topic this morning. After nearly 40 years the language and the spirit of Helsinki have not changed. Means, of course, have changed: that is why it is so urgent that we say emphatically that these fundamental freedoms transfer to the new media and Internet frontiers.

But freedom does not mean anarchy, as we are well aware about the threats that can come from our new technologies. Our primary challenge is combating cyber-crime, hatred, intolerance,

racism, violence, trafficking, and exploitation of children, without harming freedom of expression. Our Irish friends worked hard on these issues last year and I hope the Ukrainian Chairmanship continues on this path.

**“In developing their co-operation the participating States will place special emphasis on the fields as set forth within the framework of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, with each of them making its contribution in conditions of full equality.” Principle 9.**

When it comes to **contributing in full equality**, what does that mean as other regional security arrangements transform? In the first committee this afternoon we will re-focus on our common security community with a discussion on changes being proposed for the European Union defense budget. How much is too much for individual nations to give toward a collective defense? I look forward to discussing the ideas and impact of EU policies, which inevitably affect our region at large.

This afternoon we will also have an interesting exchanges of views on border co-operation. Many OSCE states have experienced the difficulties in dealing with human trafficking and illegal immigration, posing threats not only to the lives of migrants but also the stability of the whole OSCE area. In my country these issues are sadly known to well, given the unbearable amount of lives already lost in the Strait of Sicily.

We , in previous declarations repeatedly stressed the importance of co-operation on migration policies and border security. How we police, preserve and protect international borders is fundamental to our region of co-operation. I congratulate our field missions in Central Asia for their persistent and tireless work, which is, as I have recalled many times, the real backbone of the OSCE. Though only four years old, the OSCE Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe is already an OSCE landmark – an invaluable source of knowledge for officials in that area.

Afghanistan. Iran. Syria. Only one may be an OSCE partner, but together they share nearly 6,000 kilometers of borderland with OSCE participating States. In light of this fact, we must step up our efforts to make the OSCE area a safer place.

We will have the chance to debate the situation in Syria and elsewhere more tomorrow, but I would like to offer a few words on the country today. My visit to the Turkish-Syrian border was one of the most important moments of my presidency. Luckily, the suffering of people escaping a fratricidal war is something difficult for many of us to imagine. I say “luckily”, but I know it is not luck. Our security is not by chance, our peace is built through purpose, thanks to the energy put forward by you, the OSCE militants, conflicts have been averted or deescalated within and across our borders.

Recalling the extraordinary effort of Turkey and others countries in assisting and sheltering refugees from Syria, I want to send a message of hope to the Syrian people. May our discussions here help spur greater dialogue and swifter decisions among those who have the power to restore peace and save lives in Syria.

So step in, debate, argue on all the issues on our agenda and keep that conversation back in your own parliament. Thank you for being here today. I hope we make good use of our time and take advantage of this opportunity to be an **active** voice for the OSCE.