

INTERVENTION DE M. ALAIN NERI, PRESIDENT

Again I would like to stress that facts and borders matter first. It is all very well to consider that our organization can soothe and try to prevent conflicts when we see that it cannot. It is indeed a tribute to our diplomatic skills that the OSCE is still considered by both parties in the Ukrainian war as a possible go-between but if we want to face the future, we must be a little more ambitious.

We all remember that the former Soviet Union first sought a European conference on security issues because it had hoped that such a meeting would result in formal recognition of the political boundaries established after Yalta, i.e. some sort of renewed and final acceptance of the Iron Curtain.

Today, as we plan to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, what we must remember is that what really matters first is “boundaries”. I will even say that what really matters first and foremost is the permanence of boundaries.

After the Fall of the Berlin Wall, new boundaries were quite officially and peacefully agreed upon, but they were not imposed and it was all the more easy as these boundaries were in most cases a return to historical landmarks.

Let us be clear. We must always oppose change of boundaries by force. As to facts and borders, I must repeat that today it is obvious that some member States are dissatisfied with certain borders as is fully exemplified by what we call the “frozen conflicts”.

So my first point today is a modest proposal: if there is a dissatisfaction on the Russian part with the actual boundaries of our continent – as there seems to be – let us meet with our Russian friends and discuss about it and let us peruse all the frozen conflicts we have now on our hands from Kaliningrad to Stepanakert and including, of course, Ukraine which is not exactly dormant at the moment, even now in spite of the Minsk II agreement. All these dormant conflicts are – I must say – entailed by Russian dissatisfaction.

This I why we should think of a great conference on all those conflicts and try to discuss these thoroughly.

With this proposition, I mean that we should not forget about the Helsinki Final Act but on the contrary, keep the principles we had then agreed upon and organize a new

conference that would lead to a new Final Act by which we would agree on the intangibility of the European frontiers.

The Helsinki Final Act has done its job but this is now part of History. We may rejoice and celebrate, but the best way to celebrate is to start all over again and work together for the sake of the stabilization of boundaries. Now the question is: will Russia accept a new large conference on all European frozen conflicts? That is the question.

We are on the brink of a new war because the East -West divide is deepening. What sort of misunderstanding is there? Not really a misunderstanding but the revelation that the Russian East is now feeling so different from Western Europe that it will not share its values anymore. To me, it comes as a disappointment. But what if Russia sees things otherwise and seek refuge in its eastern dreams?

Today what worries me most is that Russia would want to decide for other countries. If Ukraine opts for a western destiny, why should Russia object?

Let us hope that we can organize a new conference.. The only way to revive the spirit of Helsinki is to bring the Russians back to it. As long as the Russians refuse, there will be sanctions and we shall be facing a terrible deadlock or worse, a possible war.

Of course, there are many other threats today, but the most distressing one is the inner threat. We should join forces against Islamic terrorism. Instead of that, we are divided when the Western world and Russia should be united. Let us find a way out of this deadlock and a new conference might be the solution.

I have another practical proposal: the OSCE could confirm its role as mediator defending Peace, Democracy and Human Rights by taking up a new task as a “buffer actor” in frozen conflicts or in conflicts on the verge of being solved. This “buffer force”, comparable to the UN Blue Helmets, and working for the OSCE, could be the Nordic Battle Group, an existing force of 1 500 men who are now ready to intervene at the shortest notice. This is my second proposal and I would be very grateful to you all if you would contemplate examining these two proposals. Thank you.