



**INTERVENTION OF OSCE PA SECRETARY GENERAL ROBERTO MONTELLA
HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE**

“THE OSCE ASTANA SUMMIT HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE”

19 February 2021

Session II, OSCE Activities, Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Security Community

Thank you, Madam Moderator,
Dear Excellencies, Colleagues, friends,

At the outset, let me thank the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Library of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan for organizing this event. It is a great pleasure for me to be part of this big “OSCE family” gathering to mark the 10 years from the Astana OSCE Summit as well as the upcoming 30 years of Kazakhstan’s independence. And on this I wish to say “*qutti bolsin!*” to all Kazakh friends. It is a pity that we cannot hold this conference in person and celebrate together in the beautiful Nur-Sultan.

Today, I wish to briefly focus on three main points. The first: the relevance of the Astana Summit and how the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is trying to revive its spirit. The second: following the theme of this session, the relevance of OSCE activities and of Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Security in the current multilateral context. The third: the wider added value of Parliamentarians within the OSCE framework.

Dear Colleagues,

I was myself in Astana ten years ago, and there is one thing that, above all, impressed me: I saw the political engagement and the belief that was being put in that summit. I felt I was being part of something big, something that mattered, something that could make the difference. It was not – you will forgive me - one of these tiresome and over-mandatorily spirited Ministerial Councils we have been used to in the last few years, with the unavoidable liturgy of Ministers

coming, delivering a predictable statement, and leaving. There was real interest. I know there are now some debates on whether the OSCE should hold another summit or not, ten years after Astana. I won't enter into this debate, it is up to governments, but – summit or not – what we need is the “spirit of Astana” to get back to the organization. This means high-level political attention. Governments need to consider the OSCE toolbox when they make their strategic plans, they need to see there is this organization, flexible and unique, at their disposal. Indeed, some of the challenges the organization is facing are due to a general crisis of multilateralism and a notable degree of international cooperation fatigue, but others are of political nature and strictly peculiar to the OSCE.

We, as OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, thought that we do have some assets to help revive the Spirit of Astana. Last July, after participating States could not reach consensus on the reappointment of OSCE Heads of Institution (but this was just the final trigger), we launched an initiative aimed at mobilizing our parliamentary delegations, including in their national Parliaments and vis-à-vis their governments, to bring back the political attention and thrust that the OSCE needs. To this end, I hired in September Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, former OSCE Secretary General, as a high-level expert, asking him to coordinate such efforts. In December we presented the Call for Action, a document, signed by former OSCE leaders (including our dear Kanat Saudabayev here with us today!), that points to the need to strengthen the role of the Organization in addressing the contemporary challenges and to enhance its effectiveness, including through the promotion of genuine political dialogue. This document will serve as a basis for further work which, under the guidance of the Assembly's Bureau, and through a series of targeted meetings and events, will aim at making use of Parliamentarians' assets to revitalize the OSCE impact as we head towards the 50th Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act.

Revitalizing the OSCE brings me to the next point: you focused this session on the relevance of OSCE Activities and the importance of the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Security Community. First of all, “OSCE activities” is a very wide concept, if we think about the impressively wide range of areas the organization is involved in all three dimensions and beyond. We should devote a whole conference only to go through each one of them. So, let me just spend some words for what is considered one of the “crown jewels” of the OSCE: “the field”. As I have myself

worked for almost 15 years with the OSCE in the field in South Eastern Europe, I have touched its added value with my own hands. I saw clearly what the OSCE action meant for the citizens living there, especially in post-conflict situations. Maybe it's sometimes less visible or less "mediatic" work, but so crucial for the individuals, especially when you can truly improve their life quality, facilitating, for instance, ethnic reconciliation (something I worked a lot on in the early 2000s). It's something that the OSCE manages to achieve because of its comparative advantage in fostering dialogue with all stakeholders, and in understanding how stability and security of a region start from the very basics, from each and every neighbourhood.

Coming to the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security concept. Ten years ago in Astana, when presenting the Commemorative Declaration *Towards a Security Community*, President Nazarbayev said: "*We realize that the way to a true Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian community with united and indivisible security will be long and thorny*". In fact, events in the last decade, starting from the Russian annexation of Crimea, made this way extremely thorny, more than he probably thought in 2010. However, in Astana there was the consciousness that the OSCE, as opposed to other organizations, could be the right platform to ride that thorny way. And, even in the light of the new challenges, especially tense east-west relations, I am convinced – and we should all be – that it is still the right platform. The OSCE is *inclusive* and *comprehensive*, and this is a unique added value we must preserve. Naturally, commitments must be implemented, and principles cannot be violated, but the OSCE is a platform for dialogue – where we talk about problems – and not a platform for mere condemnations. With the current spirit, the Helsinki Final Act would have never been signed in 1975, and we cannot say problems were fewer then. However, there was the *political will* to overcome them. My wish for this session is that instead of talking about Euro-Atlantic *and* Eurasian security community, we can try to talk about building synergies *from Vancouver to Vladivostok* altogether.

One more reflection on international cooperation. I mentioned earlier that part of the problems the OSCE is facing are due to a worldwide crisis of multilateralism. This doesn't mean we should remain passive to this. Actually, it means that we, as "international community", should redouble our efforts to prove that for the global challenges we are facing the selfish recipe is not the answer. Only increased

cooperation at all levels and joint solutions are. The OSCE could serve as a best practice on this, if only we tried to really invest in it. We have the capacity. Let's make use of it.

Finally, a point on the role of Parliamentarians within the OSCE. I wish to draw your attention to two assets that can benefit the whole organization. 1) the general service of parliamentary diplomacy to provide an additional and useful platform for dialogue, especially in the current challenging geopolitical scenario; 2) the ability to mobilize national Parliaments, leveraging on their institutional oversight and legislative functions, to promote the visibility and toolbox of the OSCE and to support the implementation of international commitments, including OSCE decisions and PA resolutions. Don't hesitate to make use of these parliamentary assets. We all constitute different components of what I call the "OSCE family". Our aim is the same, as the same are the "end users of our product" – the citizens. We can serve them together and, in the words of Secretary General Helga Schmid, "we can deliver as a whole".

Dear friends,

In conclusion, as time is up, let me sum up my main points for you today:

1. Yes, the OSCE is relevant, now more than ever, but we need to bring back the Astana Spirit together with high-level political attention to the organization's work.
2. We need to focus on all the concrete benefits that the OSCE brings to our citizens and invest in them.
3. The added values of this organization are its inclusivity and its capacity to foster dialogue. If we compromise on that, we are compromising on the whole organization. Let the OSCE be the OSCE.
4. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is at disposal to offer its contribution, leveraging on its distinct assets.

Thank you once again to you all for this timely conference.

Thank you! *Rakhmet!*