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Bruce George Addresses the 11th Ministerial Council in Maastricht

In his address to the 11th Ministerial Council in Maastricht on 1 December 2003, OSCE PA President Bruce George urged the international community to dig deeply into its pockets to assist Georgia in its period of crisis. "Georgia needs assistance for its elections, but more than that. It is almost a failed state. It needs support in the form of experts to help create good governance; it needs expertise to help free and fair elections so that the January elections meet international standards; and, above all, it needs resources for economic growth."

In his address, President George expressed the Assembly's enormous appreciation to Chairman-in-Office Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and his team "for their very substantial contribution to the work of the OSCE." The President paid particular attention to the international fight against terrorism. He applauded the initiatives and actions of the OSCE in both preventing and combating terrorism.

He pointed out, however, that, "whilst we have been adapting, notwithstanding so have they, and consequently the threat has probably increased rather than diminished. I am afraid the modern nation-state is not well equipped, some might add even incapable of fighting terrorism on a global scale. They must work collectively and be prepared to tell their citizens that this conflict, which is not with the Muslim world, but with Muslim extremists, will take years or decades to resolve."

Mr. George emphasized that the OSCE and the OSCE PA should be doing more to reassure and relate with Muslim states

in North Africa, the Middle East and in the rest of the world, including an increased commitment to member states in Central Asia.

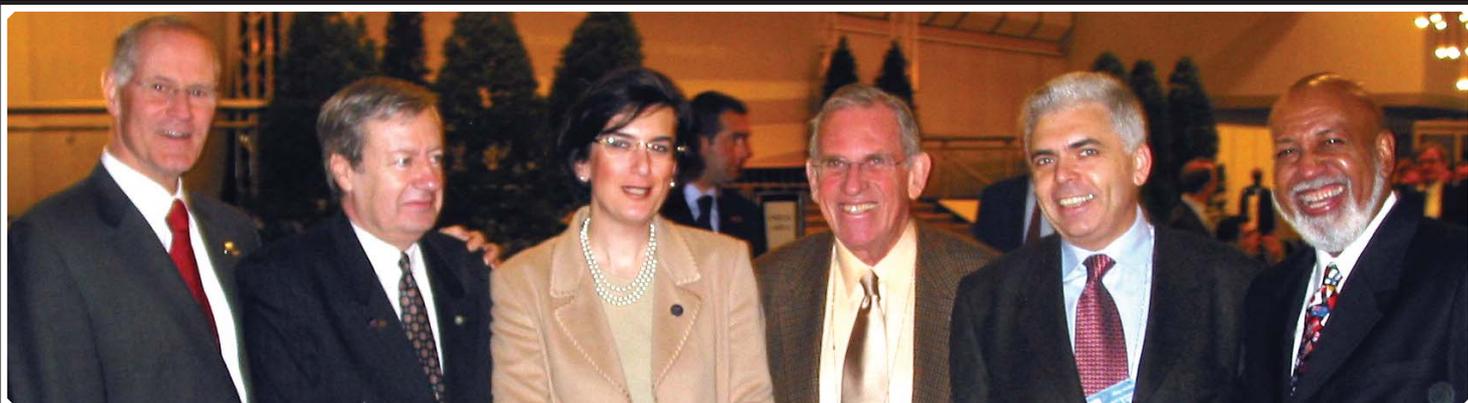
Consensus Rule

In their respective addresses to the 11th Ministerial Council in Maastricht, both the Chairman-in-Office and the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly raised questions about the current OSCE consensus rule.

Dutch Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer raised the question of whether it was necessary for all OSCE decisions to require consensus among the 55 participating States, as is the case at present. "In my view, it does not make sense to apply it to purely administrative matters, for instance. Or to appointments to positions such as Head of Institution, where the need for consensus now causes inordinate delays."

In his address, to the Ministerial Council PA President Bruce George pointed out that although NATO has a consensus rule like the OSCE, its has evolved different ways of being flexible so as not to allow a paralysis of non-decision making. "Consensus has its price. If that price is the absence of taking the right and necessary decision or to postpone the right decision, or to dilute the decisions, one may wonder if the price to be paid is too high. Perhaps you may look again at the Assembly's principle of occasionally using approximate consensus."

The Assembly has been recommending a change in the consensus rule for more than ten years.



The OSCE PA was strongly represented at the Maastricht Ministerial Meeting. Left to Right: Canadian Foreign Minister Bill Graham, former Treasurer of the PA; Hungarian Secretary of State Andrej Barsony, former PA Vice-President; Georgian Acting President Nino Burjanadze, presently a Vice-President of the PA; PA Treasurer and Canadian Senator Jerry Grafstein; former PA president Adrian Severin (Romania); and U.S. Congressman Alcee Hastings, also a Vice-President of the PA. PA Vice-Presidents Tone Tingsgaard (Sweden), Giovanni Kessler (Italy), Ihor Ostash (Ukraine), and Nevzat Yalcintas (Turkey) were also present in Maastricht.

OSCE Journalism and Democracy Prize to Committee to Protect Journalists

The U.S. based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) will receive the 9th OSCE Prize for Journalism and Democracy. President Bruce George announced this after the Meeting of the Assembly's Bureau, which was held in conjunction with the Maastricht Ministerial Council. "Granting CPJ this honour is a strong statement by the Parliamentary Assembly in support of a courageous and professional organization which defends the right of journalists to report news without fear of reprisal," said Bruce George who also announced that the Prize will be presented at the OSCE PA

Winter Meeting in Vienna on 19 February 2004.

The \$20,000 award is given annually by the OSCE PA to journalists, or groups of journalists, who have, through their work, promoted the principles of free journalism as laid down in the OSCE Budapest Declaration of 1994. The CPJ is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to the global defence of press freedom, founded in 1981. It works in more than 120 countries, many of which suffer under repressive regimes, debilitating civil war or other problems that harm press freedom and democracy.