



OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Conference
“Fostering Economic Co-operation and Stability in the OSCE Region”
11-14 May 2012, Batumi, Georgia

Opening Remarks

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Dear Secretary General,
Dear members of the Parliamentary Assembly,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a great pleasure for me to have the opportunity to address this Conference convened by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Allow me to begin by expressing my appreciation for the initiative of the Parliament of Georgia to invite the Assembly to organize this Conference in the beautiful city of Batumi.

The thematic focus of this Conference demonstrates once again the importance attached by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to strengthening co-operation on economic issues. It is a sign of recognition that economic issues and economic co-operation play an important role in promoting stability and security. As representative of the OSCE's Second Dimension, I cannot but applaud your efforts and dedication, and express my own commitment to further enhance our co-operation towards achieving our common goals.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly - the body bringing together elected representatives from the 56 participating States – offers a meaningful venue for dialogue and brings an important added value in strengthening our Organization's capacity to contribute to security and stability in the OSCE region. The work of the Parliamentary Assembly enhances the OSCE's relevance for the region as a whole.

The importance of *Fostering Economic Co-operation and Stability in the OSCE Region* has been noted in important OSCE documents like the 2003 Maastricht Strategy Document for

the Economic and Environmental Dimension which emphasizes that economic co-operation is necessary to avoid new divisions and to narrow disparities between and within our countries in order to achieve sustainable results.

I am pleased to note that increasing the effectiveness of our work in the economic and environmental dimension has been quite high on the participating States' political agenda recently. A multi-year process of dialogue and consultations on this topic concluded with the adoption of a Permanent Council Decision at the end of last year in Vilnius (PC.DEC/1011). Currently, the Economic and Environmental Committee has initiated a process of assessing the implementation of the above mentioned Maastricht Strategy, in particular in view of the evolving economic and environmental challenges.

Another important development was the successful conduct, last year in October, of the first Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting (EEDIM). Through the above mentioned PC decision, the EEDIM has become an annual meeting. Paired with the Economic and Environmental Forum, the EEDIM can and should play a central role in fostering dialogue among participating States, as is the case with more established implementation review meetings in the politico-military and human dimensions, thus contributing to establishing a more balanced approach across the three dimensions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me turn now to an extremely relevant and also topical issue - the promotion and practice of Good Governance. The issue is topical for the OSCE because *Promotion of Security and Stability through Good Governance* is the focus of the 20th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum in 2012 under the Irish Chairmanship.

This year's Forum process has already gone through the preparatory phase. Two very productive and insightful Preparatory Meetings of the Forum were held in Vienna and Dublin, in February and April 2012 respectively. We still have the Concluding Meeting ahead of us in Prague on 12-14 September. I cannot stress enough the importance of events like the Forum which facilitate the exchange of best practices and ideas among participating States, OSCE institutions, international organizations, representatives of NGOs, as well as the business and academic communities. And I would like to take this opportunity to call upon all

of you to actively support and contribute to the success of this year's Forum process. We do hope it will lead to strengthening the OSCE's commitments in the field of good governance.

Good governance is extremely relevant as it is key to sustainable economic development; it is a fundament and a guarantee of economic stability and growth. It is thus essential in overcoming the financial and economic downturn. The current focus of the Irish OSCE Chairmanship on good governance ensures continuity and consistency to our work in the second dimension.

In this context, I am pleased to mention that next week, on 14-15 May, my Office together with the OECD and the UNODC will organise in Bishkek an *Expert Seminar on "Asset Declarations for Public Officials: a Tool to fight Corruption in Central Asia"*. I would like to highlight that elected officials – including members of Parliaments – have an important role to play in fostering a culture of integrity, transparency and accountability, free from corruption and money laundering. In that regard, my Office stands ready to explore co-operation opportunities with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. We also support the work of our colleagues in ODIHR to assist interested countries in introducing *Professional and Ethical Standards for Parliamentarians*.

My Office and the OSCE field operations have a valuable track record of activities in support of the OSCE participating States in promoting good governance and transparency with a view to strengthening socio-economic development. I will give you just one example of an activity conducted here, in the city of Batumi, in November 2009, when, with the support of the Government of Georgia, we organised a regional seminar on fighting corruption in the area of transport infrastructure development in the South Caucasus. It facilitates information exchange on effective policy mechanisms and legal frameworks in public tendering and bidding processes. Good governance in economic matters is essential to attracting foreign investments. Countries prosper when they create and maintain a favourable business environment, with clear, simple and transparent laws and with strong and accountable institutions. It is obvious that Parliamentarians can do a lot in that regard, in establishing a legislative framework conducive to business development.

Another aspect of good governance that was high on our agenda is good governance in transport and at border crossings. Together with our partners in the UNECE, we launched at

the beginning of the year a *Handbook of Best Practices at Border Crossings – A Trade and Transport Facilitation Perspective*. We advocate, *inter alia*, for the adoption and implementation of relevant international conventions and for the transposition into national legislation of recognized effective practices.

Effective and secure transport and cross border trade underpin economic growth and development which are among the highest priorities for all our countries. Transport brings countries, people and businesses together, it facilitates and stimulates regional co-operation. The OSCE can and should continue to support such efforts. The city of Batumi is a privileged place to discuss these issues, as we are here at the cross-road of important transportation corridors between Europe and Asia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to conclude by emphasizing once again the importance of the economic and environmental dimension to the OSCE comprehensive approach to security. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has always been a strong advocate and a promoter of closer and meaningful co-operation in confronting economic and environmental challenges in the OSCE region. I am therefore looking forward to our deliberations over the coming days and to the outcome of this Conference.

Thank you for your attention.