

Address given by Dimitrij Rupel on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act (Helsinki, 1 August 2005)

Caption: Address given in Helsinki on 1 August 2005 by Dimitrij Rupel, Slovenian Foreign Minister and Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, at the opening of the seminar on the 30th anniversary of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

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30 years, 30 messages (Helsinki, 1 August 2005)

Dr. Dimitrij Rupel
Foreign Minister of Slovenia
Chairman-In-Office of the OSCE

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, colleagues, friends!

Here we are again!

It took thirty years to travel from Helsinki to Helsinki. But what a travel, what a time it was!

There were a lot of conflicts and problems, even tragedies, but after all, it was three decades of positive development.

After 1975, the iron curtain started to tear. In the eighties, Central- and Eastern-European dissidents started journals and NGO's, wrote manifestos, established political movements and non-Communist parties. They formulated "the democracy agenda" that brought the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), and a thorough transformation of Soviet, Yugoslav and other Communist societies. Ronald Reagan met Mikhail Gorbachev in 1988. Empires broke down. The political stage of Europe was taken over by young and energetic democrats who had lived on the margins of the previous society. The East started to join the West. The EU and NATO enlarged.

The positive development was attacked by the terrorists on September 11, 2001, and continues to be challenged today in Spain, Great Britain, Egypt, Russia, Turkey and elsewhere.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I remember Helsinki and the CSCE from the meetings of the Slovenian opposition on the eve of the first democratic election in former Yugoslavia. What we knew about the CSCE, sounded subversive and liberating. The letters CSCE we whispered with hope and enthusiasm.

As we gather here to review our common past and outline our common future, I wish to present to you what I consider the **30 most important messages of the OSCE on the 30th anniversary of this organization**, which I hope will outline not only our past achievements but challenge us to proactively engage in the challenges ahead. I wish to speak to you today about these:

The years leading up to the signing ceremony were a whirlwind of diplomacy. Before the first meeting at the Dipoli Conference Centre in November 1972, a series of major steps were taken to satisfy key preconditions by the main players.

As a result, the possibility was created for a major European security conference. Finland took advantage of its geo-strategic position in Europe and its impartiality to offer to host the conference. I dare say that there probably would not have been a CSCE if it had not been for the initiative and determination of your former President Urho Kekkonen and the efficiency of Finland's diplomatic corps.

That meeting in Dipoli in 1972 set in motion a process that surpassed the wildest dreams of its planners.

The product of two years of negotiations came to fruition in the summer of 1975 when thirty five heads of state and government met in the Finlandia hall.

Despite the grand occasion, there were plenty of sceptics who felt that the meeting was a de facto recognition of the Cold War status quo. On both counts, the critics said, the West had sold out to the

Communist bloc. But it did not turn out that way.

In 1990 and in 1991 the Iron Curtain fell, and new democratic governments took over. The OSCE was at the center of this great moment in history, working over a period of 30 years to pull together the West and the East.

In many ways, this moment of unification continues as the OSCE zone spans now from Vancouver to Vladivostok housing under one roof 55 nations. For that we can thank the Helsinki process. This process was, on the one hand, a series of meetings and commitments that followed up the Final Act and created a momentum for dialogue, confidence building, and openness.

The Helsinki process was, at the same time, the underground movement that was inspired by Principle Seven of the Act – dissidents across Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union rallying around the human rights commitments to force their leaders to keep the promises that they had made.

The combination of these inter-governmental and non-governmental streams created a river of change that swept away the foundations of communism and a polarized European security system. This helped the process of détente, and built trust and confidence. It linked human rights and security.

In short, the CSCE process was a key element in ending the Cold War and making Europe safer and more united.

Dear Colleagues,

The process of creating Europe whole, free, and prosperous is not yet complete. Peace in the Balkans is still fragile, while in parts of Europe reforms are only a few years in the making. It is important that we keep vigilant and that the OSCE remains involved in South East and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

The OSCE has been a prominent builder and consolidator of Western Balkan democracies through offering a helping hand in promoting good governance.

The Western Balkans, however, is being slowly absorbed by Europe, which at the end of the day, makes sense. This area belongs in the EU and I hope we will soon see a new EU-Balkan momentum—maybe in the format of a *partnership for prosperity*. On the other hand, there is a danger of negative attitudes developing on both sides.

The OSCE remains, however, a central partner in progress and reforms in Central Asia. This is an area in urgent need of attention and help. And I don't say this in a patronizing way. Central Asia is a fantastic region with a paramount geostrategic position, rich in natural resources and culture. It is also a region in transition, where many positive developments are taking shape.

Let us consider the recent presidential election in Kyrgyzstan, which by the OSCE standards were for the most part free and fair. Kyrgyzstan is in a process of democratic consolidation. The OSCE should stand ready to be a partner in this process, and must be able to help the new government establish democratic principles and reach economic prosperity. What happens in Kyrgyzstan is important for transition and change in the whole of Central Asia.

The OSCE can and should help Central Asia deal with issues of governing capacity, corruption, and pockets of lawlessness. We cannot afford to tolerate lawless regions within our community. In the age of interconnectivity and international terrorism, states have an additional responsibility to exercise sovereignty responsibly. Pockets of lawlessness are gathering zones for terrorists, though as we are reminded by the July 7 London attacks, extremists live right amongst us – 2nd and 3rd generation citizens. Thus, we have to be careful about the parallels we draw between 21st century terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and global problems like poverty. These two phenomena are grave in their own accounts, but are not necessarily linked.

What happened on September 11 and then again in Madrid, and now in London and in Sharm al Sheikh is also an attack on the vary values that the OSCE holds dear. It is a struggle of ideologies and the OSCE's is one the terrorists disagree with—shall I say, profoundly. Our societies and communities will continue being targets, and frankly, I don't believe we can ever get rid of terrorism in its entirety. What we can do however, is minimise the impact in terms of raw damage resulting from terrorism; marginalize the terrorist's appeal; and keep the worst of weapons out of the hands of the terrorists.

The intolerable proposition is WMD terrorism.

This means that we need to crack down on international organized crime which can help terrorists get access to WMD. Organized crime and terrorism are really two sides of the same coin. Here, the OSCE can do more, and this is why law and order, and good governance in Central Asia and beyond are so relevant. We can work within the OSCE context to assess and then help secure the WMD stockpiles in Russia and across Central Asia. We have the format—let's use it also for this purpose. We must cut off the supply. I see almost no way for approaching this problem from the demand side of the equation. Bin Laden has been more than clear in stating that acquisition of WMD is a 'religious calling' of a sort.

Democracy and good governance are the best long-term security policies, and the worst enemies of organized crime and clandestine groups. This is one of the reasons why I appreciate so much the democratic achievements connected with the presidential elections in Kyrgyzstan.

The solution to Central Asia's institutional underdevelopment will not come overnight. And our job will become even more difficult if we focus on the individual cases and lose the regional perspective. Moreover, for this project to succeed, we need full cooperation and coordination between the U.S., the EU and Russia. The role of the media and the NGO's should not be overlooked. Their importance has sometimes been underestimated in countries West of Vienna, while in many countries East or South of Vienna, former rulers of autocratic regimes have become owners of strategic political and economic instruments, especially the media, which they use in a most paradoxical ways, actually disrupting the development of democracy.

We have to make the necessary long-term political commitments to stabilize and democratize Central Asia. It's impossible to be serious about democracy and progress in this part of the world without commitment the resources. Some form of a reconstruction and development agency for Central Asia is an idea worth pursuing.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our organization has been invited to perform also in Afghanistan and in Palestine. We have developed relations with Mongolia, South Korea, Thailand and Japan. There are initiatives to establish a new working relationship with China. Clearly, the pressure is to engage out of area as well as in area. I think we have to take advantage of these opportunities, and welcome new partners into the OSCE. Participating in out of area operations should not be a taboo issue for the OSCE. In fact all regional organizations—including NATO and the EU—are considering ways and means to work out of area. It makes sense give the 21st Century geostrategic context. There is hardly a threat or a problem today that is endemic to a particular area or group. Instability is an incredibly fluid condition; as is stability.

Dear Friends,

I think it is about time that the OSCE became a fully-fledged international organization with member states rather than participating states. A good start would be to give the OSCE a legal personality – maybe in the future we could consider a Statute or Charter.

We should sharpen and raise the OSCE's profile. The OSCE does great work, but it is an unsung hero. We need to better inform the public about what we do, and this could perhaps be achieved by identifying and concentrating on a few key areas and strategies.

After the summer break, we will have an opportunity to exchange views on reform and to set an agenda for strengthening the OSCE's effectiveness. The report of the Panel of Eminent Persons and other contributions provide us with plenty of ideas. Maybe in the near future it will be time to hold an OSCE Summit to crown the reform process and underline the need to take further common action that builds on our common purpose.

The process of strengthening the OSCE should respond to real needs and not abstract models. Our daily work, particularly in the field, should constantly remind us of what we do well and what needs improving. Our field missions are of paramount value and we should continue supporting them and making them work better.

We need to show the same political courage in plotting a future course for this great Organization and the ideals that it stands for. Let us move ahead in the spirit of co-operation and goodwill, and cultivate this spirit also amongst the strategic groups—i.e. students, business leaders, and academics.

We have managed to achieve what we have in the last 30 years because this vast community has learned to reject ethnic hatred, discrimination, corruption, poverty... and totalitarian politics. Terrorists want to stop the positive development that started in 1975, called the Helsinki Process, and that has changed the world. As we count our victims on the streets of New York, London, Madrid, Sharm al Sheikh, Beslan, Tashkent, Istanbul, and other cities, the message is simple: terrorism can never be as powerful a force as the act of persuasion, cooperation, and integration.

In conclusion, I would again like to thank you for hosting this meeting. To all participating States, to all those who have been involved in and touched by the Helsinki process, and to everyone working in this great Organization, I say Happy Birthday OSCE!

Thank you!