

REMARKS

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

at OSCE Summit

Palace of Independence, Astana, Kazakhstan

December 1, 2010

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you very much, Mr. President, and I thank you, the chairman in office and the government and people of Kazakhstan for your gracious welcome to this beautiful capital city and for hosting this important summit.

This is a significant meeting for the OSCE. It is not only the first summit since 1999; it is also the first-ever summit east of Istanbul. And we have the opportunity, if we seize it, to reconnect today's organization with the history-making spirit of Helsinki and carry it forward into the 21st century.

The Helsinki Final Act was based on respect for territorial integrity, self-determination, and peaceful relations among states. But also, it brought to the forefront of international dialogue the revolutionary idea that true security demands democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms for individuals within states. Since 1975, this concept of comprehensive security has been a rallying cry for generations of reformers who have claimed their rights and left their mark on our history. And in this globalized, interconnected world, comprehensive security also means that insecurity anywhere in the OSCE region is a challenge for all of us.

Yet I think as we've already heard from so many of the preceding speakers, the principles and commitments enshrined in the accords face serious challenges. Regional crises and transnational dangers threaten our people. Democracies are under pressure and protracted conflicts remain dangerously unresolved. Therefore, we meet at a time when the OSCE, which was designed to tackle multidimensional challenges, can only be effective if participating states back its institutions and missions with political will. That is why we are seeking not only a strong document that reaffirms our commitment to Helsinki's founding ideals and their implementation, but also a forward-looking framework for action that translates Helsinki principles into concrete steps to advance security in all its dimensions.

In my brief time, I would like to outline three of our priorities. First, an increased role supporting our mutual interests in Afghanistan. I thank the leaders at this table who have recognized that instability in Afghanistan is dangerous not only for Central Asia, but for the OSCE region as a whole. Individual nations have been important partners in helping the Afghan people rebuild their country and pursue comprehensive security. Forty OSCE nations already contribute to the coalition and our host, Kazakhstan, will soon join them. But the OSCE itself should play a greater role. OSCE participating states have 1,200 miles of borders with Afghanistan. And we should expect OSCE efforts to improve border security, counter illicit trafficking, boost legitimate trade, and promote economic development.

Afghanistan is just one conflict where the OSCE can and should play an expanded role. In fact, we believe the organization needs to be empowered to respond more effectively to crises within the OSCE itself. It is encouraging that Russia also recognizes the need to improve on our existing capacity. And we are working to find a framework that will allow for timely, impartial OSCE reporting during emergencies like those we have seen in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. And again, I commend Kazakhstan for the leadership role that it played in responding to the situation in Kyrgyzstan.

Second, a greater capacity to respond to urgent conflicts would be a big step forward, but an even more essential task is to strengthen OSCE's role in preventing conflict from erupting or reigniting. There is no other regional organization as well positioned to do so. We can start with Georgia, whose sovereignty and territorial integrity the United States strongly supports. It is regrettable that a participating state has proposed to host a mission and the OSCE has not been allowed to respond. We here at this table must let this organization do its job and restore a meaningful OSCE presence to Georgia. We also call on all parties to fully respect and implement the August and September 2008 ceasefire arrangements. In this regard, we particularly welcome President Saakashvili's pledge not to use force unilaterally. And we hope this pledge can help us break new diplomatic ground.

We hope that this summit's framework for action will also call for the resumption without delay of formal 5+2 talks to resolve the conflict in Moldova and identify specific steps to promote transparency and demilitarization of the conflict consistent with OSCE goals, statements, and commitments. And we must also renew our efforts toward a settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh based on basic principles elaborated under the auspices of the Minsk Group. Let me reiterate on behalf of the Minsk Group co-chair countries that the foundation of any lasting and fair settlement must be the Helsinki principles as well as the six elements articulated by Presidents Medvedev, Sarkozy, and Obama on July 10, 2009 at L'Aquila and repeated at Muskoka on June 26, 2010.

These proposed elements were conceived as an integrated whole and any attempt to select some elements over others would make it impossible to achieve a balanced solution. We can also contribute to stability across the OSCE region by expanding and updating the military-to-military confidence and security-building measures of the Vienna Document to bring it in step with the realities of today's security environment.

Finally, we must address serious shortcomings in implementing our commitments to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Empowering civil society is key to the future of this region and the OSCE as a whole. Last night, I was privileged to attend a town hall meeting with NGO leaders from across the OSCE at Eurasian University. I was impressed by their commitment to build a better life for their fellow citizens and we all must recognize civil society as a partner that challenges our governments to do better.

The essential human dimension of the OSCE's vision of lasting security demands that we do more to make good on the promise of Helsinki. It is not enough to design a national human rights plan if it isn't implemented. It is not enough for governments to empower only the civil society organizations they agree with while crippling others with legal restrictions and red tape.

And is it not enough for a constitution to guarantee freedom of the press if in reality, journalists are put under pressure and even assaulted.

In fact, it is not enough just to hold elections. The whole process must be free and fair with the benefit of monitoring by the OSCE. And once in office, elected officials must govern democratically and build strong institutions. Yes, the list is long, but we're not asking participating states to accept new principles or rights – only to honor existing commitments.

As President Gerald Ford famously said in Helsinki at the signing of the Final Act, history will judge this conference not by what we say here today; by what we do tomorrow. Not by the promises we make, but the promises we keep. That is why I believe our reaffirmation of Helsinki principles ought to be accompanied by a focus on implementation. Let's take an honest look at where implementation is weak and build our framework of action to address those areas where we need to do more.

The legacy of Helsinki is a road we have committed to travel together, not a destination. But it is a road that must be open to all people wherever they live. Consensus is our organizing procedure and our guiding principle, but we must not allow it to be an impediment to effective action. Our goal here in Astana should be to move forward on democracy, human rights, economic growth, and strengthening our security community. In other words, let's embrace the vision of Helsinki and apply it faithfully in this new century. And if we can do that, then we will not only have a successful summit; we can indeed create a safer, freer, and more prosperous future together.

Thank you.