



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**Secretary General Lamberto Zannier**

**Address at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of Regional, Subregional and other International  
Organizations on Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation**

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Secretary General El-Araby,  
Ambassador Alim,  
Ambassador Bilman,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset let me say how much I appreciate your invitation, Secretary-General El-Araby. I am very happy to be here in Cairo. My visit is part of the OSCE's engagement with its Mediterranean Partners. We regularly exchange information on matters of common interest, and the OSCE shares its experience and expertise in building a security community in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space. Our outreach to our Mediterranean Partners has intensified in recent years, which is something I am very pleased about.

Today marks the third time we meet with the UN and fellow regional organizations to discuss our co-operation in the field of mediation. These discussions play a valuable role in ensuring we work together in the common interest of making

peace through dialogue. I am proud that the OSCE has played a leading role from the outset. My hope is that these exchanges will continue in the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I know from my personal experience how crucial mediation is to promote security. In 2008, for example, when I was Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Kosovo, I mediated between Belgrade and Pristina regarding a six-point plan aimed at solving complicated issues related to Serb communities in Kosovo. The parties would not meet face to face so I conducted extensive shuttle diplomacy. I could not tell you how many times I travelled back and forth between Belgrade and Pristina! Progress was slow and there were numerous setbacks along the way, which obliged me to adapt the strategy. But in the end, the parties successfully accepted the six-point plan. The plan was welcomed by the UN Security Council. It resulted in the reconfiguration of the international presence in Kosovo and paved the way for the rapprochement between Belgrade and Pristina.

The lesson I draw from this experience is that a mediator has to be flexible, able to adapt to changing circumstances, and manage relationships with a complex set of actors. Mediation also requires political sensitivity in terms of knowing who can help and of building a group of friendly stakeholders. Above all, my experience in Kosovo confirmed that mediation is an indispensable tool to address common security challenges and to work towards peace, not only in the Western Balkans but across the globe.

This is also why mediation is important for the OSCE as the largest regional security organization in the world. As I said on previous occasions, mediation is part of the DNA of the OSCE. The peaceful settlement of disputes is one of the

guiding principles of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. During the Cold War, the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe served as one of the main platforms for dialogue between East and West.

When in the early 1990s the CSCE evolved into the OSCE, we were tasked to mediate in several conflicts. Some of these mandates continue until today, even if the modalities are very different. The Organization acts as co-mediator in the 5+2 talks on the Transdniestrian settlement process. The OSCE also deals with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through the Minsk Group and through the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. With regard to Georgia, the OSCE co-chairs the Geneva International Discussions, and it co-facilitates the meetings of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism dealing with the situation along the administrative boundary line.

Mediation is also an important tool for the OSCE to prevent conflicts before they erupt. Our field operations regularly facilitate dialogue at the local and national level to reduce tensions and foster social cohesion. For example, the OSCE Office in Tajikistan regularly convenes so-called Social Partnership Clubs, where government, political parties, and civil society actors come together to discuss a wide range of issues. I also want to highlight the role of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. Her work of facilitating dialogue behind the scenes has often made it possible to prevent conflicts at an early stage.

To enhance the OSCE's work on mediation, we have recently begun to build a systematic mediation-support capacity in the Conflict Prevention Centre within the OSCE Secretariat. For high-level mediators, we are organizing a number of tailor-made mediation coachings. For example, last November we conducted coaching

sessions for the incoming OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Special Representatives for the Transdniestrian settlement process and on the South Caucasus. These coachings helped to ensure that there is continuity and consistency in mediation and that the incoming mediators are fully aware of the history of the respective processes. We are also creating a roster to deploy mediation experts at short notice. We are off to a good start, but there is a lot more we can do.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered here to provide input on the forthcoming UN General Assembly resolution on the role of regional organizations in mediation. As I said at the last Ministerial Breakfast organized by the Group of Friends of Mediation, this is a timely and important topic, and I commend Turkey and Finland for taking it up. The topic is in line with a high-level event we are organizing in May on Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. One aim of the event is for regional organizations to come together, strengthen their interaction, and have a discussion on a common security agenda. I invited the heads of key regional organizations to lead individual sessions on different sets of themes. I look forward to closely working with you on this.

Today, mediation is an increasingly crowded field. Co-operation is paramount for effective mediation. Allow me to return to the Western Balkans to illustrate this point. As an element of April 2013 agreement between Belgrade and Pristina, the parties invited the OSCE to facilitate local elections in Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo. This is because our presence on the ground is trusted by all communities and because of our recognized experience in election support. The OSCE facilitated the weekly meetings of a joint working group that successfully achieved a compromise between the parties and paved the way for the municipal elections last November and December. During the elections, the EU

and NATO, alongside other international partners, supported the OSCE operations on the ground.

The local elections in northern Kosovo were a success because the different organizations shared a unity of purpose. We were working towards one goal. There was also a clear division of labor allowing each organization to bring its added value to bear. This is what we should strive towards in mediation processes: working together to tackle common challenges in a way that maximizes the contribution of each. This is valid not only for the UN and regional organizations, but also for our co-operation with other players in the mediation field, including civil society and NGOs.

How does co-operation in mediation come about? We have different mechanisms at our disposal for this purpose. One approach is that peace talks are facilitated by different organizations on an equal footing. For example, the OSCE co-chairs the Geneva International Discussions together with the EU and the UN. This has proven to be a useful arrangement, as the co-chairs established fruitful coordination. Another option is joint appointment of envoys. For example, Lakhdar Brahimi serves as joint envoy of the UN and the League of Arab States to Syria. My hope is that today's meeting will explore some of these mechanisms and that the General Assembly resolution will provide further guidance in this respect.

To foster co-operation among mediation actors, I also see a number of low-hanging fruits. Holding regular consultations among regional organizations, as we are doing today, is important. It fosters personal networking and a common understanding of the issues at stake. The Group of Friends of Mediation led by Finland and Turkey also contributes to this. I am further convinced that staff exchanges and staff talks

between our organizations add value by strengthening our working-level contacts. We had a staff exchange with the UN on mediation, which we found very useful. The OSCE also holds regular staff talks with the UN and the EU, where mediation-related issues are discussed. We further co-operate in the area of mediation support, for example by inviting each other to training courses and by facilitating deployment of experts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, let me highlight two key points. First, regional organizations have an important role to play in mediation processes. Their familiarity with the political and cultural context of a conflict is an important asset that should be harnessed in peacemaking efforts. Second, effective mediation requires co-operation between different third parties: the UN, regional organizations, States, NGOs, and even eminent personalities. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, but in each case co-operation should be organized so that the comparative advantage of each actor is brought to bear.

With these words, I would like to reiterate my gratitude to Secretary General Al-Araby for inviting me to Cairo and for hosting this important conference. I look forward to interesting discussions.

Thank you.