

ASIAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION GROUP MEETING

10 JULY 2020 9 a.m.

Prof. Paola Severino

Mr Chair, Distinguished Authorities, dear partners for cooperation, dear colleagues,

It is a great pleasure and an honour, indeed, to address this audience today.

It has been a rich and productive week in the area of the OSCE commitment to combating corruption. On Tuesday, I had the pleasure to convey my closing remarks at the High Level Conference on the fight against corruption organised by the Albanian Chairmanship. On Wednesday I had the opportunity to join a discussion on current developments in the process of reform of Public Governance in Armenia and on the advancement of the OSCE extra-budgetary project on “Strengthening Anti-Corruption Reform in Armenia”. Today I am happy to re-activate the partnership with Slovakia following the successful cooperation we had during the Slovakian OSCE Chairmanship in 2019.

Allow me to start my brief remarks by singling out elements of the discussion that took place last 6th and 7th July during the High Level Conference.

The Conference served as a reminder and confirmation of the existence of a wide-ranging political will in the OSCE region to prevent and fight corruption more effectively, including through cooperation in investigating and prosecuting corruption-related crimes.

All speakers contributed to the discussions by highlighting the need for more transparency, integrity and accountability in public administration and deeper trust among public and private actors.

Particularly worth mentioning are the active and qualified contributions offered during the panels by the OSCE Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation. This demonstrated once again the political and practical value of our partnerships within the OSCE.

Today's seminar takes place at a critical juncture for the joint commitment of the OSCE Participating States and Partners to combating corruption and enhancing public governance institutions.

We are living in a time of exceptional and unpredictable circumstances, ones that are exerting enormous pressure and great strain on public governance systems. This predicament is giving rise to concerns as to the resilience of our public governance, in the face of risks of instability against the growing public demand for quick and efficient responses in terms of provision of services and public spending.

Indeed, preserving the sustainability of our governance structures stands out as a most urgent task for all our countries. However, while we should remain vigilant on the actual risks posed by the magnitude of the challenges ahead of us, we should also try and balance any such grim scenario of demise with a call to grasp the opportunity offered by the crisis to expedite the modernisation of our public governance systems, alongside a strong re-affirmation of their main pillars and tenets.

I am referring to the need to leverage the severe constraints posed by the crisis to apply and extend measures of simplification of rules and procedures, in a renewed effort to foster collective responsibility

and a culture of integrity between citizens and government, toward the formulation of a new social compact.

I am referring to the need for a renewed commitment to go further in the digital transformation of companies and governments, while ensuring transparency and protection of critical data.

I am referring to a call for promoting a participatory approach among governments, civil society, the business community and the media to foster citizens' trust and social consensus on non-tolerance of corruption.

Last but not least, I am referring to the need to re-affirm the importance of international cooperation and a multilateral approach as the most effective way to prevent and react to global threats.

I wish you all fruitful discussion and exchanges during today's program.

Thank you