

## **Conferenza OSCE**

### **Developing anti-corruption strategies for the digital age**

#### **Recent trends and best practices in the OSCE area**

**Roma, Università LUISS, 12 novembre 2018**

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#### **Intervento della Prof.ssa Paola Severino**

#### **Rappresentante Speciale della Presidenza in Esercizio per la lotta alla corruzione**

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Distinguished Authorities, dear Ambassadors, colleagues and friends, good morning.

It is really a great pleasure for me to open this conference today.

I am delighted to see you here and I wish to express my gratitude, also on behalf of the Italian OSCE Presidency, for honouring this conference with your participation.

I am particularly grateful to the Italian Chair itself – I wish to pay a special tribute to the Italian Foreign Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi, a very good friend of the LUISS University, where he was teaching before he was appointed Foreign Minister, and a very good personal friend of mine. Mr. Moavero had kindly indicated his availability to participate in this conference despite having his very busy schedule. Unfortunately, at the very last minute he had to cancel his participation as he had to attend another event, the conference on Libya in Palermo, which is also taking place today. Mr. Moavero kindly asked his Chief of Cabinet, Ambassador Riccardo Guariglia, to participate in his behalf. Moreover, the conference will be attended by other highly qualified representatives of the Italian institutions: the Italian Minister of Justice, Mr. Alfonso Bonafede, has kindly accepted to deliver a keynote speech tomorrow morning; and the President of the Anti Corruption Authority (ANAC), Mr. Raffaele Cantone, will also join us in sharing concluding remarks.

I feel privileged that the OSCE leadership is present at this conference in its entirety. I wish to take the opportunity to thank the OSCE Secretary General, Ambassador

Greminger, for the excellent cooperation we have had over this year, in particular with the Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, Ambassador Zugic.

I am also very glad to recognise the presence of many eminent personalities which are related to the visits I have paid to the capitals of OSCE participating States in my capacity as Special Representative of the Italian OSCE Presidency. I am referring to the Albanian Minister of Justice, Ms. Etilda Gjonaj, whom I have met in Tirana last month; the Armenian Minister of Justice, Mr. Artak Zeynalyan, whom I met in July, the Director of Ukraine's NABU, Mr. Artem Sytnik, whom I have met in September; and the Russian First Deputy Justice Minister, Mr. Oleg Plokhoi, who is here for the Minister Konovalov, whom I met in St. Petersburg in May. Your presence, as well as the presence of many other highly qualified representatives of OSCE countries, is a tangible, encouraging sign of the importance we all attach to the fight against corruption, and to the role of the OSCE in this specific respect.

This conference, as you know, comes as a culmination of my mandate. It therefore also offers a timely opportunity to look back and take stock of what for me has been a very enriching, instructive year. In the history of the Organisation, I was the first Special Representative for combating corruption. I feel honoured to have had the opportunity, and the responsibility, to contribute my personal experience in a field to which I have devoted a significant portion of my professional life. At the same time, I have to admit that over this year I have learned a lot.

This is true in general: in life, one never really stops learning. It is all the more true of such a complex, multifaceted phenomenon as corruption.

Corruption, in fact, has with many different features, and at least as many different implications, affecting security, the economy, the good functioning of the institutions, striking at the very heart of the social compact between citizens and State, and with the potential to affect even relations between and among States.

To address such a complex challenge effectively is a challenge in itself. Corruption varies from country to country— paraphrasing what Tolstoj famously said in Anna

Karenina ‘all corrupt countries are corrupt in a different way’. Therefore, a ‘one size fits all’ approach is a recipe for failure: what works in country X may not work in country Y. At the same time, it is clear that no country can think of tackling corruption unilaterally, in isolation from other countries. To the contrary: a concerted, harmonious effort is needed – international cooperation is not easy but it is indispensable as corruption – and its implications, including those which are related to security – transcend national borders.

In the international landscape, in fact, numerous organizations – some of their representatives (from the Council of Europe to UNODC, to name but two examples) are attending this conference - are lending a valuable, praiseworthy contribution to make these efforts more harmonious and effective. Cooperation with these organisations has proven very helpful in the case of Italy. In this framework, OSCE has a very valuable role to play. The added value of the Organisation is clear in my view, and it deserves to be fully appreciated. The OSCE has since its onset pursued a cooperative, holistic approach to security which makes it uniquely placed to tackle the challenge – which is in many respect a security challenge – posed by the spread of corruption. Moreover, the OSCE is based on dialogue and cooperation among equals – and for the international fight against corruption to succeed ownership of the countries concerned is essential.

In the fight against corruption, international cooperation is key; national governments are indispensable, irreplaceable actors. But I would also like to stress the role of civil societies – which is essential in my view.

Mobilization of civil society is a key element of success of anti corruption strategies. Only through full association and support from the citizens – who are often themselves at the forefront of anti corruption efforts, as we have seen in Ukraine and in Armenia, for example – can we think of the ultimate success of strategies in which prevention is at least as instrumental as repression. In this respect, I would like to stress the importance of the private sector – to establish from the bottom up, and through concrete

examples, a culture of compliance – as well as of education – to instill from primary schools the basic principles of legality and respect of the rule of law.

To mobilize the civil society, and in particular to secure the support of the private sector, a change in our communication strategies is also needed. We use to point to the criminal nature of the corruption phenomenon which is obvious. But corruption is not only a crime; it is a hindrance which stops countries from developing the full potential of their economic systems. Contrary to a widespread view, I think it is a fatal error to liken corruption to the grease which helps spin the wheels of the economy; instead, corruption should be regarded as the sand which prevents those very wheels from revolving more efficiently. Combating corruption, therefore, doesn't have to be viewed as an economic cost. To the contrary: it is an economic opportunity. Therefore, our communication strategies should stress that fighting this crime is not only a political necessity and a moral imperative: it is also, if not primarily, economically convenient. In my remarks, I have been briefly touching upon the topics to be discussed today and tomorrow. I cannot omit a crucial theme: digitalization. The digital age we are living in is revolutionizing many aspects of our life. It is also changing the face of corruption. As such, it is making the challenge of tackling corruption even more complicated, and difficult. However, I firmly believe that it is digitalization itself that has also the key to answer this challenge. Digital technology, in fact, while providing the tools which allow corruption to evolve and to become more elusive and harder to be tackled, offers at the same time opportunities to help us uncover, suppress and ultimately eradicate corrupt practices and behavior. It rests upon us to be fully aware of the challenges and seize with determination the opportunities.

In this regard, I wish to highlight a recent initiative by the OSCE/OCEEA, an expert seminar hosted in partnership with the OECD Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia to cover new approaches and practical tools to prevent corruption at local level. Discussions focused on advancing the digital transformation of the public sector in order to address corruption at the local level: in particular, the role of e-government solutions in the planning and executing of local budgets in order

to minimize corruption risks in procurement. This expert seminar was also an excellent example of the cooperation between OSCE and OECD, joining their expertise to help countries in the OSCE region in preventing corruption.

This is also the spirit animating this conference: to provide a platform for an open discussion, for an exchange of experiences and practices, which will ultimately be conducive to increase our awareness, strengthen our determination, and improve our cooperation in an effort which does require undivided attention, unity of purpose, and perseverance for the long haul.

I will now give the floor to Ambassador Guariglia - who will have himself to dash off to Palermo to join Minister Moavero at the Libya conference, then to Nathalie Tocci, Director of the Italian Istituto per gli Affari Internazionali, to be followed by the Secretary General of the OSCE, Ambassador Thomas Greminger, and by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, George Tsereteli, I wish you all a fruitful discussion and a successful conference. Thank you very much!