



CIO.GAL/184/18
13 December 2018
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ENGLISH only

OSCE Permanent Council
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(Vienna, 13 December 2018)

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Distinguished Authorities, dear Ambassadors, good morning.
It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you today.

I am very grateful to the Chair, Ambassador Azzoni (dear Alessandro), for offering me the opportunity to recall before this very distinguished body the most significant achievement of the year I have spent as Special Representative for combating corruption. At the same time, I am well aware that by accepting Alessandro's kind invitation, I took upon myself a responsibility which is anything but light. It is very difficult, nearly impossible, to sum up in a few minutes the experience of what has been for me a very intense, fruitful, exciting year. I will try my very best to summarize effectively.

As you know, when the Italian Chair of the OSCE decided to appoint me as Special Representative on combating corruption, it was the first time in the history of the Organisation that a Special Representative was assigned such a task. It was for me an honour and at the same time a challenge – I felt I was called upon to write a new page in the noble endeavor of fighting corruption starting from scratch.

However, I realized very soon that the engagement of the OSCE in the international fight against corruption did not begin with the appointment of a Special Representative. I found out that combating corruption occupied a very prominent role in numerous policy documents adopted by the OSCE throughout the past few years. And I came to discover and appreciate the commendable and very productive work being carried out by the Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, who was at the forefront of efforts and initiatives, including initiatives of cooperation with participating States.

I made a strategic objective of my mission as Special Representative to work as closely as possible with the Office of Ambassador Zugic – with mutual satisfaction I believe. We have always been very supportive of each other and I feel extremely grateful to Ambassador Zugic and his team for their constant, patient assistance, and for the helpful advice they have lent me. None of achievements which I have attained would have been possible without their support.

In assessing the outcome of the past year, I am obviously biased – nobody is in a position to judge oneself impartially. It is certainly not my intention, nor my goal, to judge what I have done. However, I believe I am not exaggerating to consider the results of my tenure as Special Representative as very important – I would dare to say, very successful.

Corruption is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon. It is a challenge which can undermine the security of both citizens and States, as well as the relations between States; it is the cause of serious malfunctioning of governments and institutions, striking at the very heart of the social compact; it is a distortion of the level playing field which prevents the optimal allocation of resources between producers and consumers, sapping legality, predictability and confidence. It is a crime as old as human kind itself; which has evolved throughout the centuries, and with modern technology has become all the more elusive and critical; and all the more important to

tackle it. It is a phenomenon which changes features from country to country, and at the same time doesn't stop at national borders; 'one size fits all' responses are therefore ineffective; international cooperation is indispensable.

Such a complicated, elusive and ever-changing challenge requires a comprehensive, joined-up response, calling for energies, efforts to be mobilised, and to be put together at all possible levels. Cooperation and mobilization are key; only concerted actions by governments and between governments and international organisations can ensure that those efforts are successful.

Throughout my experience as Special Representative, I have witnessed that the demand for international cooperation from the governments concerned is very high. And I have witnessed that the demand to cooperate with the OSCE is, if possible, even higher. In my visits, from Armenia to Ukraine, from Albania to Serbia (where I will be tomorrow), from Russia to Denmark (where I have attended, in both countries, high level international conferences), I have experienced firsthand how keen representatives of both governments and institutions are to work together, with other governments and with the support of international organisations, in order to find ways to address the challenge of corruption effectively. And I have been particularly pleased to see that the prospect of working together with the OSCE was regarded as very important.

In the international landscape, in fact, numerous organizations - from the OECD to the Council of Europe to UNODC, to name but a few examples - are lending a valuable, praiseworthy contribution to make international fight against corruption more harmonious and effective. Cooperation with these organisations has proven very helpful in the case of Italy. In this framework, OSCE has a unique role to play. This is something which in my view deserves to be underlined; something of which my interlocutors in Yerevan, Kyiv and Tirana were already very well aware. The

same awareness has been reconfirmed by the high-level participation in the conference we have hosted in Rome last month. The presence of so many, highly qualified representatives from the OSCE community constituted the most tangible evidence of the importance all participating States attach to the common goal of an effective fight against corruption.

The added value of the Organisation in the international fight against corruption lies first and foremost in the core mission of the OSCE – to promote and strengthen security. The OSCE has always pursued an approach to security which makes it uniquely placed to counter the spread of corruption. This challenge, in fact, is best addressed through the cooperative, holistic approach which the OSCE advocates. Moreover, the OSCE is based on dialogue, respect and cooperation among equals – and for the international fight against corruption to succeed ownership of the countries concerned, as well as respect for the peculiarities which characterize the situation of each country, are essential.

In the fight against corruption, national governments are indispensable, irreplaceable actors. But the role of civil societies is also 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 – we can think of the ultimate success of strategies in which prevention is at least as instrumental as repression. In this respect, I would also 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.

This is the approach – focusing on the ownership of the countries concerned, respecting local peculiarities and sensitivities; mobilizing the awareness and support from civil society; sensitizing and ensuring the association of the private sector – which has informed my work over this year. And this approach is reflected in the projects of cooperation that the OSCE Secretariat has launched in the past few months – in Armenia and Ukraine, to begin with – in an attempt to give a concrete, satisfactory answer to the demand for integrity, legality, and a more effective fight against corruption, coming from both the authorities and the populations.

Distinguished authorities, dear Ambassadors and friends,

Fighting corruption is a mission for the long haul. In order to succeed, patience, perseverance and vision are needed. The OSCE can lend an important contribution to this end. I feel privileged and honoured to have had the opportunity to lend my own contribution.

Thank you very much!