

OSCE Permanent Council
Report by Prof. Paola Severino
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Distinguished Authorities, dear Ambassadors, good morning.

It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you today.

First, allow me to express my gratitude to the Chair, Ambassador Bohac, for offering me the opportunity to share with this very distinguished body the most significant achievements of the second year that I have spent as Special Representative for combating corruption. In taking on the responsibility of this mandate for the second time, I have enjoyed the privilege of leveraging on the work done during the Italian Chairmanship and, under the guidance of the Slovak Chairmanship, consolidate its results and carry out new outreach initiatives.

In a line of continuity with the previous year, also in 2019 I have enjoyed the excellent cooperation of the Office of Ambassador Zugic – I am extremely grateful to all of them for their constant and patient assistance and commitment. Indeed, none of the achievements which I have attained would have been possible without their support.

Dear Ambassadors, during this second term in my mandate to carry forward the torch of the OSCE commitment to supporting the fight against corruption, I have continued to promote actively the principles and commitments of the Organizations, by calling on and encouraging Governments and international organizations to intensify their anti-corruption efforts and strive for higher standards of Public Governance, built upon the pillars of transparency, integrity and efficiency.

On the occasion of the missions I have carried out in some OSCE countries – allow me to recall my trip to Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Slovakia, where I have attended high level conferences and met Members of Government, senior officials and representatives of the civil society – I have come across a few confirmations of the set of assumptions and conclusions that I had formulated at the end of my previous mandate and passed on as the basis of my current one. Yet, this year's experience has been also one of epiphanies, which have fed into my enthusiasm and commitment toward this job, to the extent that I have been extremely glad to accept the decision taken by the upcoming Albanian Chairmanship to entrust to me, for the third time, the mandate of Special representative. Allow me then to thank the next Chair of the Permanent Council, Amb. Igli Hasani, for the support given to my being confirmed in the current position, wishing his team success for the challenging endeavours of the Chairmanship.

Indeed, I would like to elaborate briefly on the reference I have just made to the confirmations and epiphanies that have punctuated the journey of my second mandate.

First, the confirmations: in my commitment to creating conditions conducive to inclusive and co-operative responses to corruption I have witnessed the same awareness I had encountered previously on the very nature of the corruption as a serious security threat, one that can undermine the security of both citizens and States, as well as the relations between States; a challenge that can result in serious malfunctioning of governments and institutions, striking at the very heart of the social compact. Doubtless, this is a significant step forward in the OSCE contribution to the fight against corruption, as well as a significant step forward in the OSCE contribution to stability and prevention of conflicts in its region.

Now the epiphanies: besides the already noted awareness of the relevance of the corruption as security threat, I have been positively stricken by how engrained and ensconced have come to be, in the national anti-corruption strategies, the crucial issues of the ownership of the anti-corruption governance, of the awareness and support from civil society, of the engagement and association of the private sector, of prevention and incentives, of the role of digitalization. All issues, allow me to remark, firmly embedded into the OSCE strategy for the fight against corruption, this testifying of how effective the OSCE contribution has been in its outreach towards the potential beneficiaries.

Dear Ambassadors, as I approach the end of my second year as Special Representative for combatting corruption, I feel entitled to share with you the most important take-in of my experience so far: the demand for international cooperation on the fight against corruption is very high. What is more, the demand for the OSCE to provide its valuable contribution is even higher. The following assertion is one that I have already formulated a number of times, though I deem it important to convey it once again: the added value of the Organization 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, I am more and more convinced, makes it uniquely placed to counter the spread of corruption. This challenge is, in fact, 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.

This approach – built upon the ownership of the countries concerned; on the awareness and support from civil society; on the association of the private sector; on the primacy given to preventive measures – has informed my work over this year. This approach has been fully embedded in the projects of cooperation that the OSCE Secretariat has launched over the last few years – allow me to recall the ones in Armenia, Ukraine, Albania, Uzbekistan, to begin with.

Dear Ambassadors, the privilege of having seen my tenure being renewed already twice since the first appointment by the Italian Chairmanship in 2018, allows me to cast a glance that goes beyond the term of a Chairmanship, thus assuring a seamless and coherent transition between one Chairmanship and the other.

In this spirit, I would like to move from the core aim of today's report – reviewing the past - and, indeed, briefly cast a glance on the activities I have been planning for the upcoming months, in close coordination with the Albanian chairmanship.

My agenda for 2020, while still being drafted in its details, will be based upon three major guidelines: reasserting the commitment of the OSCE towards the Participating States who have benefitted of relevant anti-corruption projects (among them, for example, Armenia, Ukraine); leveraging on the strong interest expressed in Central Asia and in the Balkans for continued support from the OSCE in the domain of anti-corruption (among my tentative destination are Uzbekistan and Kirghizstan as to Central Asia, North Macedonia as to the Balkan Region); renewing the initiative of having a high level conference on corruption under the aegis of the Chairperson in Office in the second half of the Chairmanship. On top of these prospected activities, and besides my established participation in institutional meetings such as the Forum in Prague, I will also seek to give new impetus to the cooperation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in the fight against corruption, leveraging on the collaboration already established with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Special Representative on Fighting Corruption, Ms Irene

Charalambides, on the 2020 OSCE PA Conference on Corruption ,
scheduled to be held in Cyprus in May 2020.

Distinguished authorities, dear Ambassadors and friends,

My apologies if I have taken too much of your time, yet fighting corruption is a mission for the long haul. In order to succeed, patience, perseverance and vision are required. The OSCE can lend an important contribution to this end. I feel honored to have had the opportunity to lend my own contribution, and I stand ready, with renewed enthusiasm and commitment, to honor the trust that you have once again put on my vision and experience.

Thank you very much!