



The Council of Europe - Politics and Practice

Taler

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Omstendigheter

NUPI seminaret "The Council of Europe - Politics and practice. Is there a place for the Council of Europe in a changing European landscape"

1 President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Secretary
General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

5 The last days we have been witnessing one of the most terrible and barbaric
terrorist actions since the 9.11 attacks against New York and Washington. This
act of terrorism, only the latest in a spate of terrorist attacks in Russia, is an
acute reminder that we still have a long way to go in the fight against this
scourge. Like others, including the members of the UN Security Council, I have
10 in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee of Ministers strongly
condemned these acts of terrorism. I am particularly appalled by the fact that
the terrorists have deliberately targeted children, killing hundreds of them in
cold blood.

15 We must all work to avoid such situations in the future. The Council of Europe
will continue its co-operation with the Russian Federation on the institutional
reconstruction of the Chechen Republic, with a view to promoting social and
economic welfare in this region. I believe that other international organisations
could also make useful contributions towards a sustainable political situation in
20 the Chechen Republic. The OSCE has done so in the past, and could do so in
the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

25 I am especially pleased to welcome both the President of the Parliamentary
Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mr Peter Schieder, and the new Secretary

General, Mr Terry Davis to this seminar.

30 As a founding member of the Council of Europe, Norway has always given
high priority to the organisation and supported its work. During our current
chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, we wish to strengthen the role of
the Council of Europe and adapt it to a changing European landscape. We
35 should do this by focusing on the organisation's core values and areas of
expertise, and at the same time promote an even more constructive relationship
with the other European organisations.

For this seminar we have chosen to focus on two seemingly different subjects,
which both represent challenges to the Council of Europe - the Council of
40 Europe's interplay with the OSCE and the EU, and the societal role of prisons
in the democratisation process.

In the Council of Europe we have a unique set of common principles - human
dignity, rule of law, mutual respect and reconciliation. With its 45 - soon to be
45 46 - member states, the Council of Europe is a pan-European network that
safeguards the fundamental rights of 800 million citizens. However, size alone
does not guarantee an organisation's viability.

An important objective during our Chairmanship has been to strengthen the
50 co-operation between the Council of Europe and other European
organisations. Today's part of the seminar provides an opportunity to explore
how the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the European Union can co-operate
and complement each other.

55 The Council of Europe exists side by side with an enlarged European Union
and an active OSCE. The three organisations contribute each in their own way,
to the promotion of prosperity, security and democratisation in Europe. In turn
their roles and the way they interrelate will have to be adapted to the new
environment created by their efforts.

60 The Council of Europe and the European Union are based on the same
fundamental values - respect for the principles of democracy, human rights and
the rule of law. They both focus on democratic and economic development as a
means of promoting stability. The member states of the enlarged EU make up
65 the majority of the Council of Europe's members, and together have the

potential to exert significant influence on the way the Council of Europe works.

70 With the new Constitutional Treaty of Europe, we may also be looking at a new institutional relationship with the EU as such. We should take full advantage of the opportunities for closer co-operation this situation presents, taking into account both the increasingly overlapping membership, and the wider geographical scope of the Council of Europe.

75 Whereas the origins and history of the Council of Europe and the OSCE are different, the two organisations have in many ways become more alike in recent years. They both have a pan-European scope, and they engage in the same areas and on similar issues. This situation could lead to competition, especially when
80 it comes to activities in the field.

During our Chairmanship, we have taken an initiative to strengthen the relationship between the Council of Europe and the OSCE. With the support of the secretariats of the two organisations, as well as the current Bulgarian
85 Chairmanship of the OSCE, we will later this month establish a Task Force to look at ways of enhancing co-operation and co-ordination in areas of interest to both organisations.

There would to my mind be obvious benefits from a closer cooperation in fields
90 such as democracy building, monitoring of elections and trafficking in human beings, to mention a few.

There is no lack of important tasks to take on, and there is certainly enough work for the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the EU in a changing European
95 landscape. The aim should be for these organisations to focus on what they do best and to complement each other, rather than to compete. Only through a constructive dialogue will we be able to solve the problems we are still faced with.

100 For the Council of Europe, this also means focusing more clearly on the organisation's key objectives and the areas where it can make a difference. The Council of Europe's Third Summit, which will take place in May next year under the Polish Chairmanship, needs to address precisely these issues. The preparations for the Summit have started under the Norwegian Chairmanship,

and we will do our best to keep the work focused on how we can most effectively play our role side by side with the other European organisations.

110 This seminar should be an excellent opportunity to discuss in greater detail the challenges that I have only just touched upon.

Thank you for your attention.

115 **Kilde**
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