

Building trust

By **MARC PERRIN DE BRICHAMBAUT**

SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OSCE



MARC PERRIN DE BRICHAMBAUT graduated from France's École Nationale d'Administration in Paris. A career judge and diplomat, he has held senior positions in the French administration as a member of the Council of State, as well as in international organisations including the UN in New York, where he was a Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General for international Economic and Social Affairs. Prior to his appointment as OSCE Secretary General in June 2005, Ambassador de Brichambaut was Director for Strategic Affairs at the French Defence Ministry.

(OSCE/Vladimir Trofimchuk)

Security is a complex notion and can be approached in different ways. At a basic level it could mean feeling safe in your own home – it could mean having a home in the first place. Security is also about confidence in government and in everyday encounters with officialdom. Security begins with the sustainability of resources and the availability of opportunities – for education or for work, regardless of gender, religion or ethnicity. It is rooted in the inviolability of rights and in the belief that there is adequate recourse if those rights are violated.

Security is about feeling relatively certain that tomorrow will not differ so greatly from today. Security between states is similarly rooted in the need for stability and confidence: it requires trust.

Through co-operation, the OSCE builds trust in its region of 56 participating states, including Canada and the United States and the countries of the European Union, South-Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, the Russian Federation and the CIS. Our endeavour started as a conference to bridge East and West at the height of the Cold War, and today works through dialogue and projects on the ground in areas ranging from arms control, border management, police reform, elections, media freedom and environment to combating human trafficking and terrorism and promoting minority rights and tolerance. The OSCE is not the only international organisation working on these issues, and we pool resources and complement the efforts of other institutions. But our Organisation is unique in that it addresses all of these areas and more, through a set of commitments shared by all participating states,

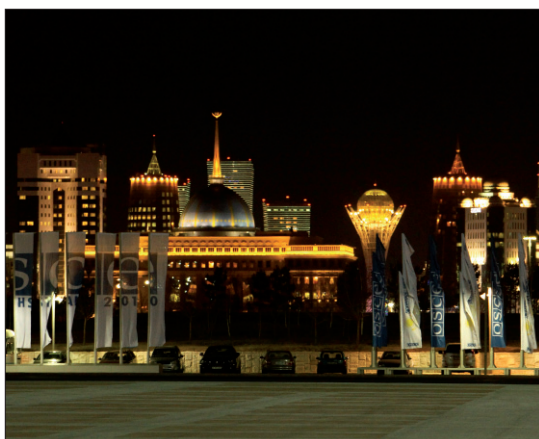
as aspects of our common security.

The 56 participating states are meeting at the highest level in Astana on 1st and 2nd December. It is the first such meeting with heads of state, partner countries and international and regional organisations since the OSCE Summit in Istanbul in 1999. What is at stake? Heads of state meet regularly, in different configurations, on a regular basis. Just before the OSCE Summit in Astana there will be a NATO-Russia Council Summit in Lisbon, and just after EU and Russian leaders will meet in Brussels. Why does it matter that the OSCE will be holding its first Summit in more than a decade?

The OSCE makes decisions on the basis of consensus, and getting 56 states to agree to hold a Summit is no easy task. The fact that they are meeting at the highest level is already a success. The willingness of so many world leaders to come to Astana is an honest admission that there are urgent problems that our countries must address – from transnational threats such as terrorism and trafficking, to the protracted conflicts in our region and the situation in Afghanistan – and recognition that the OSCE is the right forum for these talks.

But the Summit is also an expression of hope, of a shared conviction that it is worth coming together to find a way forward and to work for more than maintaining the status quo. To be sure, the status quo is a remarkable achievement as many of our states enjoy a level of security nearly unimaginable just 20 years ago. But the crisis in Kyrgyzstan makes it clear that our work is not done, and that we have a collective responsibility to do better.

The OSCE Summit most of all represents an opportunity to work towards an inclusive security community which embraces all our peoples and states, and which leaves no areas of contention to fester and develop into new threats. The NATO and EU summits with Russia are critical parts of our region's continuous security dialogue, and my hope is that the OSCE Summit in Astana will be able to build on the positive outcomes of Lisbon and contribute to a constructive atmosphere in Brussels. What the OSCE can uniquely offer is a forum of equals – not a meeting of sides or blocs, but of countries with differing perspectives and aims which are nevertheless willing to replace mutual suspicion with trust, and take up the hard work of building a more capable security community for the 21st century



A view of Astana by night. The Kazakh capital hosts the OSCE Summit on 1st-2nd December 2010