



Organization for Security and  
Co-operation in Europe  
Centre in Bishkek

**Speech of Ambassador S. Kapinos  
Head of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek  
at the closing ceremony of the 12<sup>th</sup> Central Asia Border Security Initiative Conference  
Bishkek, 28 April 2016**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Colleagues,

For centuries, the issue of borders security has been a top preoccupation of states. This is of no surprise, given that borders represent the symbol of the state, and the physical manifestation of states existence. Today, borders continue to signify the refuge of people, the safeguard of political regimes, cultures, and heritages. In the past, states were very sensitive about individual protection of national borders. We advanced a lot, arriving to the joint regional and even international efforts to consolidate border security. Why is it so important to mobilize joint efforts in this area?

Threats travel territorially. Therefore, a concerted multi-national effort for border security is an effective contribution to both national and international security. Countries are interested in controlling and curbing the trafficking of people and illegal substances across borders. They want to manage migration flows, and prevent the spill-over of radicalism and violence from places affected by conflict. Finally, there is a strong interest internationally to preserve the principle of states' territorial sovereignty.

This is a task that no state can tackle alone. The ability of any country to raise resources - material, organizational and intellectual - is limited. Therefore, it is very fortunate that this is an area where interests of nations and other international actors overlap. These joint interests consequently open multiple venues for co-operation. The Central Asia Border Security Initiative conference co-organized by eight national and international organizations is a testament to this.

Considering that we want protection from external threats, would it not be a solution to toughen control over or just close the borders? The answer is, obviously, no. The conference emphasised that borders are not only barriers against various dangers, but also benign communication gates with the outside world, through which goods and technologies are traded, culture and knowledge are shared, and partnerships are consolidated. Thus, borders are both a source of potential threats but also a window for opportunities. Their effective management is of crucial importance for economic development of countries and the welfare of their citizens.

Kyrgyzstan and its neighbours in Central Asia, a region bordering areas of volatile conflict, are benefiting from considerable assistance from international partners in securing and improving the management of their borders. The OSCE Centre in Bishkek (CiB) has made border-related project activities one of its priorities in Kyrgyzstan.

Since 2011, the CiB has been supporting the Kyrgyz authorities in setting up early warning and conflict prevention mechanisms in the Fergana Valley border areas. It included establishing community outreach mechanisms to improve information sharing between

border guards, police and local residents. It has been estimated that these efforts contributed to the decrease in the number of border incidents by 22 per cent, being highly praised by both the local community and governmental agencies.

In 2016, the CiB is further advancing its border-related partnership with Kyrgyzstan. We are focusing on building and developing capacities through professional simulation exercises, education and training, and anti-corruption efforts. The OSCE also is assisting Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan border guard services to build co-operation mechanisms and synergies through new and joint approaches to border security. Our partnership with the Kyrgyz government will also result in the development of a national risk analysis model at tactical, operational, and strategic levels, by adjusting and applying best international practices.

We do observe that there is more room for engagement with the Kyrgyz government in the areas that CiB is operating. We would like to invite other international partners of Kyrgyzstan to join efforts with the OSCE and build together synergies that could be of benefit to all interested countries in the region.

A very important area where the international partners of the Kyrgyz Republic could join efforts is assisting in the advancement of the delimitation and demarcation of boundary lines process in and around the Fergana Valley. Consistent border incidents and community conflicts in this geographic region suggest a high conflict potential of this issue. This problem has an extended history and we have also seen bleak progress in this area. Hence, an international mediation involvement would likely kick-start the so much needed progress.

An effective intervention, in our view, would be exploring the confidence and security building mechanisms (CSB) through integrated border management to prepare and support the mediation efforts. The OSCE is uniquely positioned to both conduct CSB measures and contribute to the mediating efforts, given its positive similar experience in Ukraine and Moldova.

In order to design concrete steps for partnership in this area, it is also necessary for us to assist the Central Asian interested countries to clearly identify the related border issues. At the moment they are framed very generally. The international community, interested to contribute to the solution of border related issues in the region, would also have to build the necessary incentives for our regional partners. We see considerable potential in facilitating trade and economic cooperation in the region, which are dependent on better and more effective cross-border interactions.

These approaches should have a significant impact on improved border security and management, if applied in concert with mutual legal assistance mechanisms. It will also provide an effective framework for the application of international legal provisions on border security. For instance, the development of export control mechanisms, necessary, inter alia, to implement SCR 1540, would contribute to the building of a solid and safe regional border security architecture. It is by building a regional and coordinated approach to border security that will allow optimizing the capacity of Central Asian countries to effectively deal with trans-border threats.

The conference brought us closer to understanding the positions and priorities of the Central Asian countries. It is not only an exercise in information sharing or exchanging success stories but it can be also viewed as an example of confidence building measures. The

participants' interventions, both very interesting and insightful, offered an effective coverage of the border security issues of the region. Nevertheless, we continue to lack answers to some very important questions. For instance:

1. Is it possible to enhance the effectiveness of border management through technical capacity building only, including the use of sophisticated electronic equipment? And is it possible to cope with the problems of corruption through the use of technical tools only?
2. Can we effectively address security threats and challenges without clearly framing the issues impeding our effective response to them?
3. We also need to understand if the situation over, say, the last five years has improved or worsened. If the deterioration was the result of only external factors, what has prevented us from forecasting those and timely responding in order to mitigate the related risks?
4. Are systematic reforms in the area of border security still necessary and can they succeed without being conducted as part of a larger and comprehensive Security Sector Governance and Reform effort?
5. Why do the previously implemented IBM strategies lack efficiency or failed to bring desired outcomes?
6. How successful were the past efforts to conduct reforms and why do we see a gap between initial expectations and the achieved results?

There are many more similar questions to be asked but I would like to stop here.

I very much hope that this important and successful event will be one in a string of follow-up activities that will provide answers to the questions I raised, and some others that I left aside. In conclusion, I would like to thank all participants for their valuable contributions and enthusiasm. My special thanks are addressed to the organizers of this event, who succeeded in bringing together excellent expertise and high interest on the topic of border security.