



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Factsheet

OSCE Partnership for Co-operation

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is the world's largest regional security organization, comprising 56 participating States across three continents – North America, Europe and Asia.

Over the years, the OSCE has developed special relations with six **Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation**: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, and six **Asian Partners for Co-operation**: Afghanistan, Australia, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, and Thailand.

Relations between the **Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation** and the OSCE date back to the 1970s, to the then-Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), and the signing of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia were associated with the Helsinki process since its inception, while Jordan became a Mediterranean Partner in 1998.

The relationship between the **Asian Partners for Co-operation** and the CSCE/OSCE began in the early 1990s: Japan joined as a Partner in 1992 and was followed by the Republic of Korea (1994), Thailand (2000), Afghanistan (2003), Mongolia (2004) and Australia (2009).

Security in the OSCE region is inseparably linked to that of its neighbours and can be strengthened through dialogue and the sharing of OSCE norms, commitments and expertise. The OSCE Partnership for Co-operation, which encompasses the politico-military, the economic and environmental, as well as the human dimensions of security, enables the OSCE participating States and Partners to share information about relevant developments, to identify areas of common concern and to generate ideas on jointly addressing security challenges.

The involvement of the Partners in OSCE activities has increased over the years. Today, they are almost completely integrated in the work of the Organization.

How to become an OSCE Partner for Co-operation

To become an OSCE Partner for Co-operation, a formal request is made to the OSCE Chairmanship. A consultation process follows, during which the 56 participating States take into consideration several factors, such as:

- existing close relations between the applicant and the OSCE;
- sharing of the OSCE's principles, values and objectives;
- commonality of security interests;
- intention to participate actively in the Organization's work; and
- value of the partnership to the OSCE.

These factors, while being neither exclusive nor cumulative, reflect the idea of "affinity" that guides each decision to welcome a new Partner to the Organization. Partnership status is granted only through a formal consensus decision by all OSCE participating States.



Inclusive political dialogue

Partners for Co-operation have access to OSCE official documents and are invited to the main OSCE meetings, including Summits and Review Conferences (meetings held before Summits to assess the implementation of OSCE commitments), as well as meetings at the ministerial level, including annual Ministerial Councils.

The Partners for Co-operation also regularly attend the meetings of the *OSCE Permanent Council* and the *Forum for Security Co-operation*, the two OSCE decision-making bodies convening weekly in Vienna. Since 2007 the Partners sit together with the participating States at the main table, a reflection of the important contribution they make to OSCE dialogue.

In 2010, following the Decision of the Athens Ministerial Council, the Partners for Co-operation were also invited to contribute on an *ad hoc* basis to the Corfu Process, comprising informal discussions on key issues of wider European security.

Regular high-level meetings between the Mediterranean and Asian Partners and the OSCE Troika (the current, outgoing and incoming OSCE Chairmanships), the OSCE Secretary General and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly are organized on the margins of the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings. Partners are also invited to the main OSCE annual events in the three dimensions, such as the Annual Security Review Conference, the Economic and Environmental Forum and the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, as well as to workshops and seminars.

The Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation actively participate in OSCE dialogue: they address the OSCE decision-making bodies, share with participating States information on relevant developments in their countries and regions, and exchange ideas and experience.

OSCE documents on Partners for Co-operation

The Helsinki Final Act (1975): participating States affirm their conviction that “security in Europe is to be considered in the broader context of world security and is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean area as a whole and that accordingly the process of improving security should not be confined to Europe but should extend to other parts of the world, and in particular to the Mediterranean area”.

The OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century (adopted at the 2003 Maastricht Ministerial Council): participating States call upon the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation to “voluntarily implement the principles and commitments of the OSCE” and pledged to “co-operate with them in this as appropriate”.

The Madrid Ministerial Declaration on the OSCE Partners for Co-operation (2007): participating States encourage the Partners “to increase their interaction with the participating States and the OSCE executive structures in all three dimensions”, reiterate further support to “the efforts of the Partners for Co-operation to promote the OSCE’s norms, principles and commitments in their regions” and encourage them “to take further steps towards their voluntary implementation”.

The Astana Commemorative Declaration (2010): Heads of State and Government of OSCE participating States reiterate that “security of the OSCE area is inextricably linked to that of adjacent areas, notably in the Mediterranean and in Asia”, and further pledge to enhance the level of interaction with the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation.



Main topics

Although the OSCE dialogue with its Partners encompasses the full range of the Organization's activities, each group of Partners engages co-operatively on specific issues of common interest.

The *Mediterranean Partners* have consistently focused on issues related to anti-terrorism, border security, water management, environmental security challenges, migration management and tolerance and non-discrimination.

The *Asian Partners for Co-operation* look towards the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security and to confidence- and security-building measures as possible sources of inspiration for their own region. They have shared experiences in responding to transnational threats, managing borders, addressing transport issues, combating trafficking in human beings, building democratic institutions and administering elections.

Venues for dialogue

Annual conferences – one with the Asian Partners and another with the Mediterranean Partners – provide the key forum for the OSCE's co-operation with its Partners. These meetings, generally hosted by a Partner country, provide an opportunity to exchange experience and views on security in the OSCE region and in the Partner States. They also focus on areas of the OSCE's work that are of particular relevance to the Partners. High-level bilateral meetings and events for civil society and experts are organized on the margins of these annual conferences.

Visits by the *OSCE Chairperson-in-Office* – the Foreign Minister of the country chairing the Organization – or the Secretary General to Partner States are organized following an invitation.

Regular meetings of the informal Contact Groups with the Mediterranean and Asian Partners in Vienna are venues for dialogue at the Ambassadorial level. Each Group meets approximately six times per year. *The Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners*, chaired by the incoming OSCE Chairmanship, was established in 1994. *The Contact Group with the Asian Partners*, chaired by the outgoing OSCE Chairmanship, was created in 2003. Since 2007, the Contact Groups have also met jointly on an annual basis.

The day-to-day dialogue is maintained through *technical meetings* at the level of contact points from the Vienna-based delegations of participating States and Partners for Co-operation.

The Partnership Fund

In 2007, the Partnership Fund was established as a means to support practical co-operation activities and promote further engagement of the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation. Through the Fund, OSCE participating States deepen relations with the Partners by financing seminars, workshops, internships, visits, briefings and training courses, as well as the dissemination of OSCE guidelines and handbooks designed to encourage the implementation of OSCE norms, principles and commitments in the Partner States.

The participation of Partners' representatives in OSCE activities, including training courses, is financed through the Partnership Fund. It increases awareness of the OSCE's work and values beyond the OSCE region, facilitates knowledge exchange, encourages networking and builds capacity in areas of OSCE expertise.

In 2011, the Asian and Mediterranean Partners launched a project to sponsor the placement of young diplomats from the Partner States in OSCE executive structures. The diplomats are offered a unique opportunity to learn firsthand about the OSCE's mandate and its implementation.

Projects financed through the Partnership Fund also include border security and management, countering terrorism, migration management, tolerance and non-discrimination, media self-regulation, electoral assistance, combating trafficking in human beings, gender issues, environmental challenges and ways to apply OSCE experience to other regions.

The OSCE participating States and the Partners for Co-operation contribute to the Partnership Fund.



Practical co-operation

Ongoing dialogue between the OSCE and the Partner States at the political level is complemented by practical work.

The OSCE offers the full range of its expertise to the Partners, to promote the OSCE's values, facilitate the exchange of good practices and assist the Partners in implementing OSCE commitments upon request.

The Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation can send *observers to OSCE election observation missions* organized by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). They can also *second*, on a voluntary basis, mission members to OSCE field operations and visit any of the field operations.

Representatives from the Partner States, including public officials, students and civil society representatives, can request *meetings with OSCE experts* for briefings, to share information or to explore avenues for co-operation.

In the framework of the OSCE *confidence-and security-building measures*, Partners are encouraged to participate in information exchanges on military and security information and other activities. Visits to military facilities can be organized specifically for Partners.

The OSCE Partners for Co-operation also *contribute financially* to extra-budgetary projects implemented by the Organization.

OSCE's engagement with Afghanistan

At the 2007 Madrid Ministerial Council meeting, the Foreign Ministers of the OSCE participating States expressed their concern about the impact of the situation in Afghanistan on security in the OSCE area and adopted a decision on the OSCE's engagement with the country. They underscored the importance of contributing to international efforts to strengthen border security, combat terrorism and address trafficking in small arms and light weapons, illegal drugs and human beings.

Subsequently the OSCE, seeking to strengthen the security of borders between Central Asian participating States and Afghanistan, launched and implemented in co-ordination with other regional and international actors a number of projects fostering cross-border and law-enforcement co-operation, building capacity and training Afghan staff in border security and management, policing, anti-narcotics and customs activities.

Upon invitation of the Afghan Government, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights provided election support for national elections in 2004, 2005, 2009 and 2010.

Afghan representatives participate in a wide range of OSCE events and activities through the support of the Partnership Fund. The Fund provides concrete opportunities for networking and establishes a foundation for practical co-operation.

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The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) works for **stability, prosperity and democracy** in 56 States through political dialogue about shared values and through practical work that makes a lasting difference.