

# Sitting together over a menu of measures

The *Wienerwald* plays host to both sides of the Dniester/Nistru river



Over two days in June, the small town of Mauerbach in the hills just outside Vienna was — unbeknownst to its residents — the scene of an unusual event of considerable geopolitical significance. Its finest hotel, a popular getaway nestling in the Vienna Woods, had been carefully chosen by the OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE Mission to Moldova to bring together key military and security officials from both sides of the Dniester/Nistru river — seven from the Moldovan capital of Chisinau on the right bank, and an equal number from the self-proclaimed Transnistrian capital of Tiraspol on the left bank.

**BY KENNETH PICKLES**

**W**ith its wonderful views and cozy ambience, Mauerbach was a setting tailor-made for an occasion especially meant to help improve the climate for dialogue and co-operation between the Government of Moldova and that of the breakaway region of Transnistria. The hope was that this would contribute towards the OSCE's long-standing efforts to facilitate the negotiations aimed at bringing about a political settlement to the 17-year-old conflict.

The OSCE and other international experts steered the discussion towards the existing comprehensive package of military and security-oriented “CSBMs” — confidence- and security-building measures — calculated to help eliminate the possibility of a resumption of armed conflict by decreasing tensions between Chisinau and Tiraspol and to help start a process of co-operation in all areas of security.

Opening the seminar on behalf of the Greek Chairmanship, Ambassador Charalampos Christopoulos, Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, reminded the group that these CSBMs were originally designed in 2004 and 2005 by the three mediators of the conflict settlement — the OSCE Mission, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. In a demonstration of unanimous support for the package, the three had jointly presented the package to Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin and Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov in July 2005. (Vladimir Voronin now sits as a

member of parliament and remains leader of the Communist Party.)

“Confidence-building is an important aspect of conflict resolution, and undoubtedly the most challenging field in which to pursue it is the military and security sphere,” OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut told the participants. “This can only be achieved through a spirit of openness and a willingness to compromise. For this to happen, the process must be supported at the highest levels.”

#### WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE

Laying the ground for the discussions were two distinguished experts with a wealth of

practical experience in CSBMs — Hans-Joachim Schmidt, Senior Research Fellow of the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, and Brigadier General (ret.) Bernard Aussedat from France, who was the principal architect of the CSBM package during the years he was with the OSCE Mission to Moldova.

Both emphasized the importance of transparency and verification as the basis for confidence- and security-building between armed forces.

While citing examples of successful CSBMs, Mr. Schmidt also stressed that developing such measures in unresolved conflicts over status was

## What are CSBMs?

The negotiation, implementation and promotion of an elaborate system of confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) is widely considered to be one of the most outstanding contributions of the CSCE/OSCE to the efforts of participating States to raise levels of transparency, trust and mutual reassurance in the security sphere.

The OSCE has developed an impressive *acquis* of CSBMs and norm-setting documents related to data exchange and the verification of information on military holdings and activities. Both politically binding and voluntary, these are embodied in such agreements as the Vienna Document 1999, the Principles Governing Conventional Arms Transfers, the document Global Exchange of Military Information, the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, and the Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition.

The first confidence-building measures were voluntary and, as the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 put it, were meant to “contribute to reducing the dangers of armed conflict and of misunderstanding or miscalculation of military activities which could give

rise to apprehension, particularly in a situation where States lack clear and timely information about the nature of such activities”.

Zdzislaw Lachowski, Senior Fellow at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, who has published widely on European military security and arms control, says that “during the Cold War, the voluntary rules of openness, restraint and co-operation in military affairs set out under CSBMs played a real part in easing tension in Europe and in avoiding conflict between the rival blocs”.

He describes how CSBMs progressively developed even after the fall of the Berlin Wall and helped to maintain stability during the momentous changes taking place in Europe.

Negotiations on CSBMs, resulting in the adoption in 1986 of the Document of the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe, paved the way towards enhanced political dialogue. The agreed commitments in Stockholm were further elaborated in the Vienna Document 1990. The successive CSBM documents of 1992 and 1994, agreed in the spirit of

co-operative security, were the stepping stones leading to the Vienna Document 1999 adopted at the OSCE Summit in Istanbul.

Negotiations on the further development of CSBMs take place within the OSCE’s Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), which meets every week in Vienna to discuss and take decisions regarding military aspects of security in the OSCE area.

“Today, in the early twenty-first century, the concept and process of CSBMs find themselves increasingly called

upon to respond to new risks and challenges in the field of security, including the non-State and non-European dimensions,” says Mr. Lachowski. “There is a growing focus on measures and arms control-related arrangements below the continental level — at the regional, sub-regional, bilateral and intra-state levels — and growing interest in whether these approaches could usefully be applied beyond the European continent.”

The OSCE’s Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), an autonomous decision-making body, is where negotiations on CSBMs take place. On 16 September, the FSC invited Finnish Secretary of State Pertti Torstila (centre) and NATO Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Sir John McColl (right), to discuss security and defence matters. Representing the FSC chairmanship, currently held by the United Kingdom, was Berenice Gare (left), Deputy Head of Mission for Political-Military Affairs in the UK Delegation.



OSCE/SARAH CROZIER



OSCE/CRISTINA GNAGIUC

Colonel Sergiu Guțu from the Defence Ministry of Moldova (left) joins the Transnistrian delegation for a photo, with General Albert Moinard (back to camera) from the OSCE Mission looking on. Despite the steady rain, the social part of the event contributed in no small way to mellowing the mood. Both sides gathered at a typical Austrian wine tavern, chatted amicably and proposed toasts to each other.

particularly difficult — in spite of the special benefits CSBMs bring to the parties involved in these cases.

“When an immediate resolution is not likely, as in Moldova, the measures can at least lead to a reduction in tensions,” he said. “Moreover, CSBM agreements between a central State and an entity that are aimed at addressing practical problems do not predetermine the solution to the status issue itself. However, CSBMs that are to the mutual advantage of both sides, such as those dealing with disaster relief, can be a good starting point.”

Bernard Aussedat gave an overview of the CSBMs, which cover such areas as disarmament, creation of a co-ordinating body, regular exchanges of military information, mutual inspections of weapons manufacturing factories, and joint training in peace-support operations. He and the other experts had leaned heavily on the experience gained by the OSCE and the international community through the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the Vienna Document, and the regional arms control arrangements under the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Flexibility was an underlying feature of the proposals, he said, in the sense that possibilities existed for the selective application of various elements and for new proposals to be incorporated.

“The main task now should be to open a permanent dialogue through an expert working group that will carry this process forward,” Mr. Aussedat said.

#### PRODUCTIVE AND USEFUL

Agreeing on the need for CSBMs, both sides warmly welcomed the opportunity to take part in the “productive and useful” exchange and to hear the opinions of international experts. They also recognized that it was in their mutual interest to include co-operation between their respective law enforcement bodies and explored

## The OSCE in Moldova

[www.osce.org/moldova](http://www.osce.org/moldova)

*In the spring of 1992, rising tension between the Government of Moldova and that of the separatist Transnistrian region escalated into violent conflict, resulting in more than a thousand casualties and more than 100,000 people temporarily displaced. A ceasefire agreement was signed in Moscow in July 1992 and the parties committed themselves to negotiating a settlement to the conflict.*

*In 1993, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the forerunner of the OSCE, established a mission in Moldova, based in the capital Chisinau. Its goals were to assist in negotiating a lasting and comprehensive political settlement of the conflict, to consolidate the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova, and to reach an understanding on a special status for the Transnistrian region.*

*The OSCE Mission takes part in the Joint Control Commission, which supervises the ceasefire in the Security Zone — the area on both sides of a “line of control” separating the military forces of the two sides. Members of the OSCE Mission frequently patrol within the Security Zone.*

*Since 1999, the Mission has also been charged with the responsibility of facilitating the removal and destruction of Russian ammunition and armament from the region*

*and to ensure the transparency of this process.*

*In addition, the OSCE Mission promotes a broad spectrum of human dimension issues such as human rights, including language and minority rights, democratization, media freedom and the fight against human trafficking.*

*Confidence-building efforts go beyond the military and security sector. Activities aimed at improving dialogue and co-operation span a wide range of areas that encourage people-to-people contacts and help improve the lives of residents of both banks of the Dniester/Nistru river.*

*For example, the Mission fully supports several working groups of experts from both sides who meet to discuss and explore joint activities and projects in matters of mutual concern, including health care and social protection, transportation and infrastructure, agriculture and the environment, and trade and economics.*

*The Mission to Moldova has a branch office in Tiraspol and an office in Bender, a city on the right bank that is controlled by Transnistrian de facto authorities. This presence enables the OSCE to be in constant and direct contact with both sides of the conflict and to play a lead role in co-ordinating a joint approach to confidence-building.*

*The Mission comprises 13 international staff members supported by a national team of 37.*





Under the supervision of the OSCE, Moldovan soldiers unload plastic explosives into a bunker where provisions have been made for their safe and secure storage.



A Moldovan army engineer prepares a radio-controlled system for the remote detonation of explosives.

## SALW weapons destruction in Moldova

**Bulboaca, a training area about 35 km east of Chisinau.** In 2007 and 2008, the OSCE helped the Moldovan Ministry of Defence to destroy more than 12,500 rounds of artillery ammunition weighing 336 metric tonnes. Funded by Finland, the activities were part of a comprehensive programme to help the Government of Moldova to adopt best practices in the storage, handling or disposal of small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition. Similar assistance could be offered to the Transnistrian authorities as part of the CSBM package.

ways in which this could be done. Not surprisingly, there were differences in opinion on exactly when and how the CSBMs should be applied, but all participants argued their points in a constructive manner.

While the main discussions were taking place, representatives of the so-called “5+2” talks — the three mediators, observers from the EU and the United States, and the chief negotiators from the two sides — held informal consultations and agreed to explore possibilities for resuming the settlement negotiating process within the official 5+2 format later this year. The Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Transnistria Settlement, as the format is officially known, has not met formally since March 2006.

While no one expected the seminar deep in the *Wienerwald* to make any dramatic breakthroughs, it did succeed in accomplishing its goals: It enabled specialists on both sides to re-establish contact with one another, to consider the ways in which the CSBM package could be implemented and, perhaps most importantly, to explore the creation of a mechanism to carry the process forward. The presence of key high-ranking representatives from the defence, interior and security establishments on both sides sent an encouraging signal, as did their agreed statement expressing willingness to continue

talks under the auspices of the OSCE.

“Since then, follow-up meetings with the OSCE Mission have already taken place in Chisinau and Tiraspol,” says Ambassador Philip N. Remler, Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova. “There’s a great deal of work still to be done, but a good start has been made. With patience and good will and with the help of the experience and expertise within the OSCE, we hope to see more progress in the coming months.”



**Kenneth Pickles took up his duties as Political Military Officer at the OSCE Mission to Moldova in December 2004 following two years as Field Assistant to the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference (the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict). Earlier, he served as an officer in the British Army in various parts of the world and completed several assignments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Georgia. From 1990 to 1992, he was an arms control inspector.**