



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

P r e s e n c e i n A l b a n i a

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**AMBASSADOR ROBERT BOSCH's REMARKS AT FORUM
'EUROPE – BETWEEN ME AND YOU', VLORA**

Introduction

Dear Mr. Velaj, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much, and I am delighted to be with you here this morning.

As the Ambassador of the OSCE Presence in Albania, I am the fourth international to speak on EU-between you and me. This may sound a bit peculiar as I do neither represent the EU nor work for them directly. So what I would like to do is to provide a short overview of my organizations history; its structure and what it stands for, not least in relation to Albania's continuing integration aspirations as, as you will see there are links between our activities and those bringing your country and those who preced you, closer to the EU-structures.

Of course, I want to make sure that we leave plenty of time at the end for questions.

My short trawl through the history of the OSCE will trace the growth of the OSCE from its origins in Helsinki into an organization with truly global reach that is actively engaged in conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. The OSCE is also engaged in other activities related to security co-operation, human rights and more.

History

The signing of the Helsinki Final Act on 1 August 1975 was a historic occasion.

35 Heads of State committed themselves irrevocably to mutually beneficial dialogue instead of mutually assured destruction.

The Helsinki Final Act was a landmark accord in many ways.

One of the most significant was that it made human rights issues subject of legitimate concern to all. Up to that time they had long been a no-go area in relations between East and West.

With the Helsinki Final Act, no longer could nations seek to shield human rights violations from international scrutiny by claiming they were internal affairs. Here the first foundations were laid to start with the improvement of human rights and freedom in the whole then CSCE area. including the till then rather closed countries under communist rule.

The agreement also featured three main sets of principles, often known as 'baskets'.

They were issues related to the politico-military aspects of security (basket I) was had at the time top priority; then co-operation in economics, science and technology and the environment (basket II), this was at the special request of the then eastern bloc; and co-operation in humanitarian and other fields (basket III), which came in at the special request of the west.

For a decade and a half after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) served as a forum for dialogue and a catalyst for change; forming a vital bridge between the two halves of what was still an ideologically, politically and economically divided Europe.

However, none of the original 35 signatories could have predicted the startling speed with which the communist bloc would finally collapse at the end of the 1980s. As regime after regime crumbled among others as a result of the emerging freedom to utter grievances. It was easy at that time to get carried away by the seemingly universal atmosphere of optimism.

History, however, refused to lie down and die. In Eastern Europe, many old tensions and rivalries - ethnic, political and geographical - bubbled to the surface.

Despite all efforts to stop them, a number of bloody conflicts would flare up in the next few years.

It was clear that the framework for co-operation provided by Helsinki was no longer enough.

As the old Soviet Union prepared to de-invent itself, the CSCE was already busy reinventing itself to meet the security challenges of the new Europe.

In November 1990, the CSCE Heads of State or Government gathered in Paris for what was only their second-ever Summit to lay the groundwork for the transformation of the CSCE from a diplomatic Conference into an Organization dedicated to the promotion of security and co-operation in Europe.

To address the new challenges created by the now-volatile situation in many regions of Eastern Europe and beyond, the CSCE created numerous field operations and other bodies.

The process was marked by the renaming of the CSCE to the OSCE at the Fourth Heads of State Summit in Budapest in December 1994.

By the end of the '90s, the OSCE had set up a considerable number of institutions and field operations, ranging in size from just a few staff to well over 1,000 in the case of Kosovo.

With their flexible and practical methods of working, these field operations contributed greatly to increased security and stability in many parts of Europe.

But the arrival of the new millennium - far from ushering in a new age of peace and security - demonstrated once again the truth of the old saying that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance.

The horrific events of September 11 in the United States, and other later terrorist attacks in several OSCE participating States, pointed to the need for a more comprehensive approach to global security.

Meanwhile, other voices calling for further OSCE reform were beginning to make themselves heard.

Was the OSCE, which had achieved so much during the 1990s, really equipped to tackle the challenges of the twenty-first century?

It is a question that will continue to be discussed in depth as the OSCE's 56 participating States consider its future.

Structure

With 56 participating States from Europe, Central Asia and North America, the OSCE forms the largest regional security organization in the world.

Like all decisions within the organization, the decision of who will chair the organization for one year is taken by consensus by all 56 participating states.

Imagine running an organization or a company where you have a board of 56 members which all have a veto right.

The OSCE could be stopped at any moment by anyone of those 56 and yet they don't do it; because they have an interest in keeping the momentum, in implementing the commitments that have been agreed, and in having this sort of permanent peer pressure.

Every Thursday morning you have a meeting of the Permanent Council, that sometimes take up special invited guests, who address given issues - head of our field missions, head of our institutions - and then current issues and current issues is what any of the participating states is interested in raising in any of the three dimensions.

This gives rise to very diversified and interesting issues.

On 22 December 2009, the OSCE Permanent Council adopted the Organization's Unified Budget for 2010, totalling over EUR 150 million.

The OSCE employs some 450 people in its various institutions and around 3,000 in its field operations.

They are very diversified, they are groups of experts that are there on the call of the host nation in order to help implement the security and the three dimensions, the standards and commitments of the organization and there is no organization which is, none of these field offices is the same.

They are all a product of a sort of 'chemistry' between the host country, what the 56 are willing to provide in terms of resources.

Locally-contracted employees outnumber international seconded employees by roughly five to one.

Seconded staff members are funded by their national administrations.

The OSCE Presence in Albania is one of these 19 field operations? It was established in March 1997, in response to the breakdown of law and order, upon a request of the Albanian authorities and a decision of the OSCE Permanent Council.

The Presence's mandate was updated in December 2003 to reflect the overall progress achieved in Albania in recent years and the positive role that the country has played in developing and improving relations in South-Eastern Europe.

Then as now, the Presence works in partnership with the Government and other national institutions to strengthen the main state institutions, to underpin a democratic system of 'checks and balances' and to foster cross-party dialogue in order to build confidence in these institutions.

In carrying out its overall goal, the Presence focuses particularly on: legislative and judicial reform, property reform; regional administrative reform; electoral reform; parliamentary capacity-building; anti-trafficking and anti-corruption; development of effective laws and regulations on the independent media; promotion of good governance and management of targeted projects to strengthen civil society; and police assistance in co-operation with international partners. These are unfortunately for the most part issues that still need attention as can be read in the EU-commissions progress reports.

In addition to the Presence's headquarters in Tirana, we are supported by its four project offices, in Shkodra, Kukes, her in Vlora and Gjirokastra that help co-ordinate the Presence's project activities outside of Tirana and maintain contacts with key local actors.

In addition to the core budget of around 3,3 million Euros, the Presence also manages extra-budgetary funds provided by OSCE participating States, totalling over 2.2 million Euros in extra budgetary funds in 2010.

In terms of staff, we have some 108 staff – comprised of 25 Internationals, 17 national professionals and 62 general service staff.

The key point to stress here is that the Presence's support to Albania is aimed at supporting the ongoing reform process to help the country with its European integration aspirations. We help Albanian institutions to strengthen their capacities and to prepare laws that are necessary to this aim. We also strongly co-operate with the EU Delegation here, and a sign of this is the fact that the Presence is implementing several key projects funded by the EU. I can mention here the project on immovable property registration and road signage in priority coastal areas in Albania, and the technical assistance project to the Government in the modernization of administrative address and civil registration systems. Lastly and most difficultly we try to help solving to always again arising political troubles and those who read the press now that our interventions are not always perceived as positive but neither party.

Conclusions

Concluding: for the OSCE the basic message is the idea that security has to come in a cross dimensional way (I am referring here to the three aforementioned baskets which are now called dimensions, so that we can build lasting overall security among our participating states based on a functioning security system, both with regards to political and military issues, and having a solid basis in the economic and environmental fields.

Our unique signature is the human dimension, the fact that unless there is respect for human rights and respect for the dignity of the individual and rule of law and a democratic perspective, you can never build long lasting security. But democracy is a key word here.

What the OSCE tries to do also to maintain the peace is to be involved in ‘early warning’ and conflict prevention in order not to come into a situation where once a conflict has happened you have to deal with crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation.

So the key principles of this ambition; inclusiveness, having everybody on board, and equality among participating states. Everybody has an equal say, everybody can freeze a process, that’s consensus based, co-operative approach.

So this is if I may say an introduction to the OSCE. I want to encourage you to go deeper by visiting our website, where you can find current and past activities and basic documents. We do also have a Tweeter, a Facebook and a YouTube function, with the most interesting statements and exchanges we have had in the recent past.

When we call upon all member states to live up to our OSCE-principles we do now say much else as living up to generally accepted democratic principles and there the roads of the EU and the OSCE coincide and we can safely say that by and large we have the same aim seeing to it that the country becomes a fully established democracy which mean a place where different parties talk in a civilized manner with each other on all levels and look for points of agreement and not of points where to differ. Only when working closely together the Albanians can reach their aims to be fully integrated and accepted in these Euro-Atlantic structures.

Now, I would be quite happy to have a debate with you and answer any questions you might have.

Thank you very much.

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