

Slovenia takes over the helm

OSCE at a crossroads

Mount Triglav, Slovenia's highest mountain and its national symbol, inspired the Chairmanship logo.
Photo: Stane Klemenc/
PR and Media Office of
Slovenia

BY RICHARD MURPHY

A hectic round of high-level meetings on both sides of the Atlantic marked the first 10 weeks of the OSCE Chairmanship of Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel.

Official duties took him to Kyiv, Brussels, Belgrade, Pristina, Moscow, Astana, Tashkent, Strasbourg, New York, Washington, D.C., Chisinau and Geneva.

Leaders with whom he held discussions included United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. He also addressed the North Atlantic Council in Brussels and the U.S. Helsinki Commission on Capitol Hill.

Slovenia took over the OSCE Chairmanship

on 1 January at one of the most difficult times for the Organization in its recent history.

Foreign Ministers had failed to agree a concluding declaration at their Ministerial Council meeting in Sofia in December. This reflected differences on key political issues among OSCE participating States. Moreover, the new year began without agreement on a 2005 budget or new scales of contribution.

Although the Organization's internal difficulties were a key item on the agenda in his meetings with other foreign ministers, the Chairman-in-Office insisted that the OSCE should not become too introverted and obsessed with its internal affairs.

"There is a whole world out there that requires our attention," he said, urging OSCE countries to overcome their differences and show willingness to compromise to ensure that agreement on a budget was reached quickly. (The Organization can continue to operate on the basis of provisional financing arrangements, but the absence of agreement on a 2005 budget meant that no new activities could be launched.)

VITAL FORUM

The Chairman-in-Office recalled that the OSCE, like its forerunner, the CSCE (Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe), had overcome many setbacks in the 30 years since the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. He insisted that it had lost none of its relevance as a vital forum for addressing security challenges in Europe.



Chairman-in-Office Dimitrij Rupel with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, 4 March.

Meeting new Ukrainian leaders, 5 January: parliamentarian Yuliya Tymoshenko, now Prime Minister, President Viktor Yushchenko and Foreign Minister Borys Tarasyuk. Photos: OSCE/BOBO



“We should not forget that the first few decades of the CSCE were marked by an atmosphere of deep hostility and mistrust, with two armed blocs confronting each other,” he said. “Helsinki launched a process of co-operative security which remains valid and relevant today. What we have in common is much greater than the points on which we differ.”

Nevertheless, in his first address to the Permanent Council in Vienna on 13 January, the Chairman-in-Office acknowledged the political difficulties in the Organization. “Slovenia takes the helm of this ship in choppy seas,” he said. Expressing concern at the tone of some statements from certain OSCE countries, he added: “We must work together to prevent political fault lines from reappearing.”

He told the representatives of the 55 participating States that Slovenia wanted to use its year at the helm to “revitalize, reform and rebalance” the Organization. He followed up on this in February by appointing a seven-member Panel of Eminent Persons to carry out a thorough review of the way the Organization operates. It is due to present its recommendations for the future by the end of June.

“My expectation, which I believe is shared by all participating States, is that you will provide us with a vision for the future and some radical, yet politically realistic, food for thought on where the OSCE should

be going in the years ahead,” he told the Panel at its first meeting near Slovenia’s capital, Ljubljana.

PIVOTAL ROLE

The Chairman-in-Office had begun the year by visiting Ukraine on 4 and 5 January. After meeting members of the outgoing and incoming governments in Kyiv, he flew to the west of the country and drove into the Carpathian mountains to visit newly-elected President Viktor Yushchenko, who interrupted his holiday for the meeting.

The OSCE had mounted its largest-ever election observation mission for the repeat second round of Ukraine’s presidential elections on 26 December. “The eyes of the world were on Ukraine for a month and the role of the OSCE election observers in the process was pivotal,” he said in Kyiv.

“I wanted to come here as soon as possible to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people and to demonstrate the importance which the OSCE attaches to a democratic and stable Ukraine, enjoying good relations with its neighbours at the heart of the OSCE community.”

Foreign Minister Rupel indicated at the very outset that the Slovenian Chairmanship would place high priority on the situation in Kosovo, where the OSCE maintains its largest field mission.

Kosovo figured prominently on the agenda in his meetings in Belgrade, Moscow, New York and Washington, D.C. In Pristina,



NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer (left) confers with OSCE Chairman-in-Office at the Conference on Security Policy in Munich, 11-13 February.

Dimitrij Rupel (left side of photo, at circular table) addresses the UN Security Council in New York, 4 March.



he met the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Soren Jessen-Petersen, and both Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb politicians.

In a signed article in the *Wall Street Journal Europe* of 11 March ("Completing Kosovo"), the Chairman-in-Office said a discussion of Kosovo's future status should not be postponed and it was high time Belgrade and Pristina were brought back to the negotiating table.

"Kosovo's future status can be resolved in a stable manner only if the result is sanctioned by both capitals," he said. "Success in future-status negotiations depends on whether we succeed in building cross-ethnic trust in Kosovo and in strengthening the confidence between Belgrade and Pristina."

In Moscow on 1 February, the Chairman-in-Office met Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to discuss OSCE reform, the Organization's election-monitoring activities, and a range of regional issues. Russia had expressed concern about what it perceived as geographic imbalances in the work of the OSCE and "double standards" in its election-monitoring.

Emphasizing that the Slovenian Chairmanship took Russia's concerns very seriously, Foreign Minister Rupel said: "We share a common desire to strengthen the OSCE and make it more effective and responsive to the needs of all participating States."

In New York, on 4 March, he urged Permanent Members of the UN Security Council to use their influence to help end

some long-standing conflicts in the OSCE region, especially in parts of Moldova and Georgia and in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

"It is difficult for inter-state organizations to deal with non-state actors, even if — as in some cases — they are de facto authorities," the Chairman-in-Office said. "There are times when the leverage of powerful states — including Permanent Members of this Council — can be crucial. I urge you to exert that pressure in the context of OSCE mediation efforts to help resolve these long-standing conflicts." He also encouraged the United Nations to make more use of regional organizations such as the OSCE.

At a meeting with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, he discussed Kosovo and the reform processes under way both at the United Nations and at the OSCE.

OSCE reform and the budget impasse were also high on the agenda at a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Washington on 7 March.

"As far as our internal difficulties are concerned, I am much more optimistic after talking to Secretary Rice," he said afterwards. "She pledged very strong support for the work of the OSCE and encouraged the Slovenian Chairmanship to continue with its efforts to reach a compromise. I am hopeful that we will see some progress in the coming weeks. We will certainly work extremely hard to achieve a breakthrough."

Richard Murphy is OSCE Spokesperson and Head of Press and Public Information.

Panel of Eminent Persons to draw up vision for OSCE's future

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office has urged the OSCE's Panel of Eminent Persons to be "bold" in performing its task of giving new impetus to political dialogue and providing a strategic vision for the Organization in the 21st century.

"I don't want to over-dramatize this — the OSCE has been in a constant state of flux since 1975 and has periodically been adapting and re-tooling itself to deal with changed threats and challenges to security," Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel said at the Panel's first meeting on 17 February near Ljubljana, "but long-time OSCE-watchers tell me that the situation now is significantly different. Serious questions are being raised at a high level about

the OSCE and there is a strong sense that something profound has to change."

The Panel members reconvened in Vienna on 10 and 11 March. They are expected to issue their recommendations by the end of June.

The OSCE participating States had agreed at their Ministerial Council meeting in Sofia in December to establish the Panel, "recognizing that the 30th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, the 15th anniversary of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and the 10th anniversary of the OSCE provide a unique opportunity to reflect on the role of the Organization in a changing Europe."



Brdo Castle near Ljubljana was the setting of the first meeting of the Panel of Eminent Persons on 17 February, following their appointment by the Chairman-in-Office (third from right) on 3 February. The members, representing a cross-section of participating States, are (left to right):

Wilhelm Höynck (Germany): Former Secretary General of the CSCE/OSCE (1993-1996);

Kuanysh Sultanov (Kazakhstan): Deputy of the Senate of Parliament and former Ambassador to China;

Miomir Zuzul (Croatia): Former Acting Foreign Minister and member of the Croatian negotiation team at the Dayton Peace Accords;

Nikolay Afanasievskiy (Russia): Ambassador to Poland and former Deputy Foreign Minister;

Knut Vollebaek (Norway): Ambassador to the U.S. and former Foreign Minister and Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE (1999);

Hans van den Broek (Netherlands): Former Foreign Minister and member of the EU Commission; and

Richard S. Williamson (United States): Former Assistant Secretary of State, U.S. Representative to the UN Commission on Human Rights, and Ambassador to the UN Office at Vienna.



Dimitrij Rupel: At home in many worlds

Dimitrij Rupel's career, background and scholarly pursuits span the worlds of politics, public service, diplomacy, academia, and arts and letters.

At 44, he was appointed the first Minister for Foreign Affairs of the newly independent Republic of Slovenia (1990-1993), a post he has held again.

He has been a Member of Parliament (1992-1995), Mayor of Ljubljana (1994-1997) and Slovenia's Ambassador to the United States (1997-2000).

His political activism goes back to the period when he co-founded and edited the magazine *Nova Revija*, which published the Slovene National Programme in 1987, a manifesto for political change. He later helped establish the Slovenian Democratic Alliance (SDZ) and became its first President in 1989.

"My first love was literature and I came to politics relatively late in life," the Foreign Minister says. "Perhaps that's why I take a broad view of Slovenia's role in the world — I see it from many perspectives."

Foreign Minister Rupel obtained a degree in world literature and sociology from the University of Ljubljana (1970), and subsequently a Ph.D. in sociology from Brandeis University in Massachusetts (1976). He was Visiting Professor at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada, at the New School for Social Research in New York, and at Cleveland State University in Ohio. He has also taught at the University of Ljubljana.

He is a prolific writer, with a string of novels as well as books with historical, international relations and sociological themes. Among his best-known works are: *Skrivnost države* (Secret of State), 1992; *Odcarana Slovenija* (Disenchanted Slovenia), 1993; *Srečanja in razhajanja* (Meetings and Partings), 2001; and *Prevzem zgodbe o uspehu* (Taking Over the Success Story), 2004.

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Cold War Echoes

By Dimitrij Rupel

When my prime minister suggested some years ago that Slovenia should take on the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2005, I knew it would be a challenge.

Our 55 States face critical security issues that require our full attention, from terrorism and human trafficking to conflicts in Georgia, Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh. The OSCE, a pan-European body spawned by the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and of which the United States is an active member, is uniquely placed to address these challenges.



The Chairman-in-Office with U.S. State Secretary Condoleezza Rice, 7 March, and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, 1 February. Photos: OSCE/BOBO

I did not imagine, though, that I would spend my first few months in the post haggling with fellow foreign ministers about a relatively insignificant amount of money. Yet that is exactly what I have been doing. The OSCE faces paralysis within months because we have been unable to agree on a 2005 budget or on how much each country should contribute in the future. The sums involved are relatively small — the OSCE budget was 180 million euros (\$238 million) last year, about four per cent of the annual budget of the District of Columbia. Running on provisional budget arrangements, the OSCE is unable to launch any new activities or implement important initiatives. This is both absurd and embarrassing.

The budget dispute, of course, masks fundamental political differences that go well beyond the OSCE. The Russian Federation and some

members of the Commonwealth of Independent States argue that the OSCE applies a double standard, that the way it monitors elections is flawed, that too much attention is paid to human rights and not enough to security.

The United States and the European Union, on the other hand, appear generally content with the focus on the “human dimension”: upholding basic human rights and monitoring elections. They rarely bring significant political-military issues to the negotiating table.

I sense a hardening of attitudes on all sides, and I hear rhetoric uncomfortably reminiscent of the Cold War. If the impasse continues, the OSCE’s credibility and its survival will

be in jeopardy. Does that matter? I firmly believe it does.

The OSCE started life in the 1970s as a series of meetings between two opposing blocs that had the power to obliterate one another. It provided a forum in which trust was slowly and painfully built. The result was a series of landmark accords, starting in Helsinki, on confidence-building measures to reduce the risk of war and on new common standards for human rights and democratic elections. Without a doubt, the Helsinki process played a significant role in helping to bring about a peaceful end to the Cold War.

After the collapse of communism, our leaders reinvented the Organization as an operational body with a network of field offices. Throughout the 1990s, it played an important conflict-prevention role from the Crimea to the southern Balkans and helped with post-conflict rehabilitation in places as diverse as Kosovo, Tajikistan and Georgia.

The OSCE has achieved much on a shoestring budget. But as the only security organization that includes the United States, Canada, Russia, the whole of Europe and the former Soviet Union as equal partners, it could achieve so much more if participating States mustered the political will to let it do its job properly.

Countries in transition are crying out for the expertise the OSCE can provide in training police forces. All countries want to boost their capacity to fight terrorism, and the OSCE helps by bringing together experts in protecting airports from shoulder-fired missiles and making passports more difficult for terrorists to forge. All of us confront the scourges of human trafficking, organized crime, and racial and religious intolerance.

Yet many OSCE countries appear to contemplate the Organization’s loss of influence with indifference. Our heads of state have not held a summit since 1999. So what can be done?

First, Russia should stop blocking the budget and engage constructively in trying to move the OSCE more in the direction it wants — by negotiation. It should play a more active role in the work of the OSCE by sending more Russians to field missions, providing more election observers and submitting more high-calibre candidates for top positions.

Second, the United States and the European Union should take Russian concerns seriously. They should avoid patronizing their partners and acknowledge that not all Western countries are perfect democracies with flawless human rights records. They should devote more attention to the political-military dimension of security, without weakening OSCE human rights commitments, and stop treating the OSCE as if it were little more than a non-governmental organization.

Third, all OSCE countries should devote high-level political attention to the Organization and use it as the effective security instrument it was designed to be. Lip service is no longer enough.

The writer is Foreign Minister of Slovenia and Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. This article reflects his personal views.