



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
High Commissioner on National Minorities

**REINFORCING THE OSCE CAPACITY AS REGARDS EARLY RESPONSE
TO CRISES AND EMERGING CONFLICTS**

address by
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to the
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Response to Crises and Emerging Conflicts”**

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In the discussion paper prepared by the Chairmanship for this meeting I read:

“What is needed now is to flesh out ideas which could potentially gather consensus, with more concrete proposals. The need for the OSCE to respond in a more timely and effective manner to urgent and potential crisis situations before they evolve into conflicts has been underlined for a long time. The “early response” topic remains, however, particularly complex to address. This is not because of lack of instruments, mechanisms and procedures at the disposal of the OSCE, but rather due to the way those are used (or not used).”

The paper continues: “But even the best capabilities and procedures are ineffective without political will to use them.”

I believe it is important to address the issue of political will or lack thereof, but I shall also try to give some suggestions that might be achievable without formal consensus. I don’t want to do away with consensus, because I think we have to be honest in admitting that we cannot expect to reach consensus on all sensitive conflict matters.

The OSCE has had two major failures lately: Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. What went wrong? Not necessarily the “early warning” part. Maybe the early warning was not up to standard in 2008, but last year we were informed. I have on several occasions commended the CPC for its ability to provide us with information on developments in Kyrgyzstan. In all modesty, I would also like to remind you of my own Institution’s activities and my briefing to the PC on 6 May 2010 after my visit to Kyrgyzstan and my formal “early warning”, which was presented to the PC on 14 June last year. The problem was not that the pS were not informed, but that there seemed to be no political will to take “early action” or to make an “early response” based on the information that the pS received. How can we better prepare the ground for such an action and are there ways and means of addressing a potential/emerging conflict without waiting for consensus? I know this sounds provocative and dangerous, but I would beg you to let me present my case before you discard it completely.

If we take a look at the draft “Astana Framework for Action”, which was not adopted at the end of the Summit last year, paragraph 6 deals with early warning and early action, addressing both the issue of improving and strengthening the OSCE early warning and crisis management capacity and the issue of reviewing and reinforcing OSCE mechanisms and

procedures as regards relevance and practical applicability. I would believe that these statements are not particularly controversial and could be picked up and would create a useful foundation or basis for a Ministerial Decision in Vilnius.

If we move from these statements of principle to implementation, I would like to address three areas of improvement on the issue of “early response” that are mentioned in the CiO’s discussion paper in front of us:

The first is the political process and decision making of the Permanent Council. If you allow me to remind you of the Final Report and Recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons, “Common Purpose. Towards a More Effective OSCE”, dated 27 June 2005, this topic is dealt with on page 20, under the headline 3.2 “Improving consultative and decision-making processes”.

Here it is specifically mentioned that one of the OSCE’s strengths is its inclusiveness. In order to involve all pS more actively and effectively, the Panel recommended introducing a committee structure made up of three pillars corresponding to the traditional dimensions: a Security Committee, a Human Dimension Committee and an Economic and Environmental Committee. Such a committee structure, subordinate to the Permanent Council, would allow for more open exchanges, would focus the agenda of the Permanent Council and would raise its profile as a forum for political dialogue and decision making.

I know that you have had three committees since 2006, presumably inspired by the above mentioned report, but it is at an expert level. You need to involve the Ambassadors in a more informal consultation process. In order for the Ambassadors to be able to go deeper into the issues to be discussed, I would suggest that not all pS should be members of all Committees at the same time.

I can see a problem with respect to participation in these sub-committees, some being more “sexy” than others. One way of dealing with that issue might be to have a rotating participation, where the 56 pS are divided into three groups with some geographical balance and with each country’s participation in a sub-committee lasting for, let us say, two years.

Discussions in a sub-committee might prepare the PC for its decision making. The sub-committee might also interact more easily with the CPC and the Secretariat on clarifying potentially sensitive issues.

Let me add that the Panel also recommended that ambassadors-only discussions be held in Vienna from time to time to encourage a more open exchange of views on sensitive matters. So this meeting is very much in line with that recommendation.

The second issue raised is the role of the CiO, the pS and the OSCE executive structures in providing timely and effective responses to escalating tensions or conflicts. When we talk about a timely and effective response, the response should be both “early” (meaning early in the build up to a conflict in order to have a preventive role) and “quick” (meaning a short time from decision to implementation). Looking again back at Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, it is obvious that both early and quick are important when we talk about response. I would, therefore, suggest that the Vilnius Ministerial decides on a “CiO Task Force”, giving the CiO the mandate to establish a small group of high-level people to send to a country or region facing a potential conflict either based upon a national request, an assessment made by the CiO itself or one or more OSCE structures in order to assess a situation and make recommendations to the PC. The group should be high level enough to have an impact. One could foresee a visit of a week or so – the Task Force should not take over the role of the PC – and make an assessment that could form the basis for a PC decision. The early response will be contextual and may vary from situation to situation. At the same time, the response should be based on certain common standards that will have to be developed. The mandate of the Task Force should also respect the mandates of the Institutions and should make sure that we avoid duplication.

As for the paper’s third proposal of “better co-ordination of efforts between the OSCE executive structures (respecting their current mandates and existing resources)”, I suppose it is hard to go against that, except that one might ask for a redistribution of resources in order to strengthen the Organization’s analytical capacity. The strengthened analytical capacity would be important for the activities of the proposed “CiO Task Force”, which would need to base itself on both up-to-date information and solid analysis. I will let the CPC argue for its need for more resources; however, there is not least a need for better co-ordination, drawing upon the information that already exists within the Institutions and the CPC/Secretariat, and the

formalization of a consultative mechanism between the Institutions and the CPC/Secretariat, fully respecting the various mandates.

In this context, strengthening the Field Missions is of great importance since they are the main provider of information. The 2005 Panel has a number of recommendations on strengthening the Field Missions, from changing secondment to contract for HOM and D/HOM, which would broaden recruitment. In 2005, we calculated that it would mean only a two per cent increase in the UB. We also mentioned the possibility of establishing both thematic missions and regional missions. There are a number of ways in which the system of Field Missions, which is the strength of this Organization, could be even more efficient in channelling available information and providing early warning, thus paving the way for an early response by the Organization as a whole.

Although mobilizing political will remains a stumbling block for speedy action, I think it is important that we are now practical and come up with concrete proposals for improving and enhancing the system. It is possible.