

Foreign Minister Tuomioja: Addressing the future of European and global security

Remarks by Erkki Tuomioja, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, at the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Final Act of the Conference on European Security and Cooperation (CSCE)

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Today's occasion is an indication of the permanent and special relationship between Finland - and the Finns - and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and its predecessor, the CSCE.

This special relationship exists not only because we feel an obligation to respect and strengthen the historical legacy of the Helsinki process and the Helsinki Final Act but also because of our interest in and commitment to the model of international politics represented by the OSCE.

The CSCE/OSCE has offered a particularly workable opportunity for small states to pursue their interests while contributing to common goals.

The OSCE, more than most other international organizations, has opened its doors for civil-society actors, non-governmental organisations, researchers and activists to participate in field operations and other activities, to become involved in the practice of world politics.

There is no need even to remind ourselves of the historic value of the Final Act in providing individuals with normative tools to make governments observe their human rights commitments. What was thought to consolidate the Westphalian order of sovereign states turned into a harbinger of the rise of civil societies in international relations. Today, it is visible everywhere.

Moreover, as an institution, the OSCE combines multilateralism with the concept of comprehensive security. They can be called an OSCE innovation from the early 1990s, dating back to the three baskets of co-operation adopted by the CSCE in the 1970s.

The OSCE experience shows how it is possible to create a bridge between universal values and norms and their practical application. With the concept of follow-up, it teaches the international community to systematically pursue an issue and persist in the field, not give in, even if progress may take time, even decades.

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President Halonen's address highlighted the relevance of all these aspects and dimensions of the OSCE model for responding to problems and challenges in today's global world.

Moreover, although global solutions are indispensable when global problems are addressed, the history of the OSCE confirms the significance of regional arrangements and innovations. We can all recall numerous examples of appeals for the launch of a CSCE/OSCE process to solve problems and conflicts in almost every region in the world.

The OSCE is not a completed project. On the contrary, it remains an uneven space with differences and discontinuities in political and social development. However, it may be more relevant today than before to assess the value of the OSCE as a source of common norms of conduct and as a model of security and co-operation for regions and subregions to the south and east of the OSCE region or anywhere else for that matter.

If we think of the difficult conflicts in the Korean Peninsula, South Asia, Caucasus, or in the wider Middle East, it will not be enough to solve the disputes in question politically, legally or militarily. A peaceful, stable and prosperous future requires the anchoring of a diplomatic solution with a network of contacts and co-operation among the neighbouring societies and countries in the region.

The world continues to be a world of regions as well as it is a global world. The following examples are new signs of progress. In Africa, a new joint institution, the African Union, backed by newly generated political will, works to solve regional conflicts jointly. In the Gulf region and elsewhere in the wider Middle East, there is a growing awareness of regional responsibility for sustainable peace. In Asia, countries, which are asserting themselves economically on the world arena, are searching for political methods and institutions of regional co-operation among themselves.

Another issue where the OSCE has set a good example, but where we need to develop our procedures is election monitoring as a vital instrument for strengthening democratic institutions and ensuring their legitimacy. One of the recommendations of the Helsinki Group - the high-level working group of eminent persons of the 21st Century Helsinki Process - is a proposal to make international monitoring of elections a comprehensive and universal mechanism covering electoral processes everywhere in the world. Election monitoring should thus become standard procedure in connection with all elections, and not something one resorts to because of implied suspicions that elections in a given country might not be freely and fairly conducted. For the OSCE, this would remove the political controversies which are problematic for the otherwise successful election monitoring missions of the organisation today.

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From the perspective of the European Union, the wider Europe or the OSCE region is a strategic space. The EU has both specific and general reasons to upgrade its role within the OSCE.

Today, it is in the Union's special interest to see that its neighbouring regions are stable and placed on the road towards peace and democracy. Here, the EU can co-operate even more closely with the OSCE, the Council of Europe and other actors, including the United Nations. The EU is not to duplicate what others do better. Recent agreement on complementarity with the Council of Europe on the monitoring and judicial assessment of the implementation of human rights corresponds to the requirements of time.

In addition to resolving open or frozen conflicts, a key common objective for all countries involved is the prevention and management of transnational risks and threats which do not recognize state borders.

The perspective of the value of the OSCE should be even wider. Security issues of wider global strategic importance as well as security problems originating from outside the region can be addressed and managed better through a well-functioning OSCE. On the other hand, regions overlap and developments in adjacent regions affect the prospects of stability and progressive change in the OSCE region.

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The EU and the OSCE are focal points in the future international responsibilities of Finnish foreign policy. Finland will assume the Presidency of the EU next year and, if our offer is accepted, Finland will act as Chairmanship-in-Office of the OSCE for the year 2008.

These coming responsibilities present Finland with both an opportunity and an obligation to contribute to a fresh and pertinent strategic view of the overall OSCE region and of its connections with adjacent regions and powers.

At the same time, as we design strategies, we need to review and develop the tools and instruments at our disposal. We have to contribute to the reform and adaptation process underway within the OSCE. And we have to see its outcomes closely connected with the interests of the European Union in a more relevant and capable OSCE.

Today is an important step in policy and strategic planning in Finnish foreign policy. The recommendations provided by the Panel of Eminent Persons, together with the recent report of the Centre for OSCE Research of the University of Hamburg as well as other assessments, provide important ideas and arguments on the future role of the OSCE for the benefit of all participating States.
