



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Talking points by the OSCE Secretary General, Ambassador Ján Kubiš
at the
International Conference
“Assessing Developments in the Western Balkans:
Problems of Today, Ideas for the Future”**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Slovak Foreign Policy Centre for inviting me here today. It is of course always a pleasure to return to Bratislava, and especially so when I am here to discuss such a challenging and timely subject, alongside such an eminent group of participants.

The OSCE has maintained a field presence in South East Europe since 1992, when we established the Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje and OSCE Missions to Kosovo, Sanjak and Vojvodina. Thirteen years later, the Mission to Skopje is still in place, alongside Field Missions in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo/Serbia and Montenegro. Those Missions employ thousands of local and international staff, and had a budget in 2004 of over €90 million. The Slovenian Chairmanship in 2005 has seen a further intensification of the OSCE's focus on South East Europe.

As invited by the organizers, in my comments today I will focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. In both places the OSCE has made an enormous contribution to the establishment of functioning institutions, the protection of human rights, in particular minority rights, and in the process of reconciling divided communities.

Both Missions have shown remarkable flexibility and a readiness to respond both to unforeseen political developments and to the changing needs of the places in which they work. This flexibility will be more necessary than ever over the forthcoming year, as we face the restructuring of the International Presence in both Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Dayton/Paris agreement has provided the basis for the OSCE's work in the country. It is only natural that the OSCE Mission's work there has changed its focus, in accordance with the progress of the Dayton agreement implementation and of democratic state building in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The OSCE Mission has also been shifting the emphasis of its programmes to take account of the increasing capacity of local institutions.

In 2004, for the first time in the post-war period, Bosnia and Herzegovina financed and ran municipal elections without direct support from the international community.

The Mission responded to the changing environment by providing increasingly technical advice to the local authorities, including new programmes in public administration reform.

As the High Representative has quickened the pace of change, the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina have more regularly turned to the OSCE Mission for advice, assistance, and support. The Mission's Department of Security Co-operation, for example, has had to take on the tasks of defence reform, while still continuing to carry out its tasks in arms control, small-arms and light weapons, and other OSCE political-military commitments.

In the year ahead, changes to the institution of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), will inevitably influence the shape and composition and role of the international presence in the country, especially as the institution increasingly becomes one of the EU Special Representative, and as the Bonn Powers are quite possibly consigned to post-Dayton history.

In a future "post-OHR world," the OSCE Mission will likely adopt a more discrete approach, increasingly playing an advisory and admonitory role rather than a pressuring and precipitating one – an important shift as local governmental and non-governmental bodies assume ever greater responsibility for their own fates.

Mission support of necessary legislative reform will be another core element in the gradual transition process, as the long-term sustainability of the country's institutions depends on the embedding of the right and appropriate legal frameworks and systems.

The Mission's work in trial monitoring could become a model for future monitoring work, demonstrating the value the Mission can add to domestic institutions by serving as an objective observer and aid in ensuring adherence to the highest legal standards.

Whatever the future may hold for Bosnia and Herzegovina or for the Mission, there is no denying that there has been much change in the past ten years. Ten years ago discussions on a single, state-level Ministry of Defence or on the need for a new constitution would have been unthinkable; now, such issues may not be resolved quickly, but they are discussed openly. As the OSCE Mission looks past its ten-year anniversary, the question inevitably arises as to the extent to which such progress would have been possible in the absence of the sustained field mission.

Kosovo

In Kosovo too, where the OSCE, since 1994, operates as the Institution Building Pillar of the UN Mission (UNMiK), we have shown ourselves ready to respond to the changing demands of the local society and the host authorities.

The 2004 Assembly elections were organised by the Central Elections Commission, a body established and supported by OMiK and now a fully functioning local institution.

We have established and built up a number of such sustainable institutions, which now independently carry out a variety of crucial tasks. Particularly worth mentioning are the Kosovo Judicial Institute, which provides training for prosecutors and members of the judiciary, and the Kosovo Institute of Public Administration, which trains civil servants. The OSCE Mission also works closely with the Kosovo Assembly, and has initiated a number of training programmes designed to develop professionalism among legislators and members of the government.

We have established and operated the Kosovo Police Service School, which has produced a cadre of well trained local officers, drawn from all of Kosovo's communities. Over the past year, as the UN Police has begun to hand over more senior positions to the Kosovo Police Service, the OSCE has rapidly stepped up the provision of specialist and management courses. In reaction to the violence of March 2004, we have placed an increased emphasis on civil disturbance training for new officers, drawing on the expertise of police trainers from OSCE participating states.

As the UN Mission in Kosovo has proceeded with the transfer of responsibilities, we have reacted by targeting our programmes to support the Provisional Institutions of Self Government (PISG) in fulfilling their new tasks.

Future Role in Kosovo

As we approach the Comprehensive Review of Standards Implementation in Kosovo, and face the likelihood that talks on Future Status will begin later this year, the need for further flexibility is clear.

There are indications that the UN intends to dramatically downsize its presence in Kosovo, and regional organizations will need to step into the breach. While the bulk of UNMiK's responsibilities will be transferred to the PISG, there are significant other tasks that can only be carried out by organizations such as the European Union, NATO and the OSCE.

The transfer of competencies to local institutions will heighten the need for capacity building programmes, and the OSCE Mission, as the Institution Building Pillar, is well placed to continue providing such assistance.

There will be other tasks, notably in monitoring of the police and the administration, where the OSCE may also be asked to take responsibility. Given that we are the only international organization maintaining a field presence throughout all of Kosovo's municipalities, and taking into account our considerable experience of monitoring in other Missions in the region, I believe we will be able to respond favourably to any such requests.

However, we cannot do everything. Following the departure of the UN, the European Union will be expected to take on the role of leading International Actor in Kosovo. It is imperative that the EU begins preparations now for that role.

The European Union cannot continue to operate in Kosovo as a donor organization confined to Pristina. It must prepare to expand its activities and presence and to take on new tasks, and it must acknowledge that Kosovo will be a long term commitment.

I therefore welcome the recent European Commission Communication, “A European Future for Kosovo” as a positive indication that the EU has recognised that the only viable future for Kosovo lies in a clear path towards European Integration.

This was also recognised by the International Commission on the Balkans, in their recently published final report. I applaud Former Prime Minister Amato on the clarity and vision of that report, and for the forthright manner in which it calls upon the EU to develop a roadmap for the Western Balkans that would involve an accelerated accession process.

The forthcoming year will be a challenge for all of the international organizations working in Kosovo. The OSCE and the EU in particular must ensure that they work together and develop a co-ordinated approach to the downsizing of UNMiK. Each organization has experience and a comparative advantage in certain fields. We must be sure to bear this in mind when assigning new responsibilities.

Conclusion

The OSCE will remain steadfast in its commitment to the Western Balkans.

If I were to draw any lessons from our experience in the region, I would focus on the need for flexibility in our planning and operations, the necessity of maintaining a strong field presence, and the importance of a co-ordinated approach by the International Community.

As we face significant challenges over the forthcoming year, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, I sincerely hope that the UN, the OSCE, the European Union and NATO will draw on their experiences of the past 13 years in formulating a unified, long term strategy for the region. Anything less than that is likely to fail.