



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

History and Background of Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) in the OSCE

I.

The founding document of the CSCE - the Helsinki Final Act - which in itself was a mechanism of conflict prevention, is still as valid today, even in the wake of the new risks and challenges that the Organization faces. Its three facets of security, the politico-military, the economic and environmental as well as the human dimensions are interlinked, and therefore comprehensive.

The Act, signed in 1975 by the Heads of State and Government of 35 nations including all NATO and Warsaw Pact countries, marked the end of an intense series of diplomatic negotiations which had begun in the Finnish capital two years earlier. This constituted a breakthrough in East-West relations during the Cold War period as participating States adopted the decalogue of basic principles guiding relations among themselves. Further, it marked the beginning of the “Helsinki process” which became the main forum for political consultation and negotiations on a comprehensive set of issues, including questions of human rights. The CSCE was instrumental in keeping the spotlight on human rights and linking the progress in that sphere with co-operation on other more traditional security questions. One of the most important of these was military security. In this way there were mutually supporting processes because parallel to the ongoing dialogue, it was possible for the CSCE to work out a set of confidence building measures (CBMs).

Linking the processes and dimensions of security became the hallmark of the OSCE – a broad-based pan-European organization built upon a community of shared values, norms and commitments. Subsequent documents of the OSCE, such as the 1990 Charter of Paris, 1992 Helsinki Document, other summit documents and more recently the 1999 Charter for European Security, also build on this approach.

The evolution of the Organization, after the end of the bipolar world, is a reflection of the consequent steps that it has taken in response to preventive diplomacy and crisis situations underpinned by a common understanding for the need to create a culture of conflict prevention. The CSCE was renamed OSCE with effect from 1 January 1995, to reflect its institutional development from a process to a body of permanent structures, active institutions and mechanisms, including ways to monitor its norms and commitments. Today, the negotiating bodies convene and bring together fifty-five participating States to communicate with one another on a weekly basis. This is where discussions are followed by decisions adopted on the basis of the consensus principle, and followed by action.

II.

The politico-military aspects of security in the OSCE area include a confidence-building regime, disarmament and arms control, as well as regional and sub-regional frameworks. This

is not only an integral part of the OSCE's comprehensive and co-operative approach to security, but has far reaching consequences for European and indeed global security.

In the Charter for European Security (Istanbul 1999), Heads of State and Government declared that, "The politico-military aspects of security remain vital to the interests of participating States. They constitute a core element of the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. Disarmament, arms control and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) are important parts of the overall effort to enhance security by fostering stability, transparency and predictability in the military field. Full implementation, timely adaptation and, when required, further development of arms control agreements and CSBMs are key contributions to our political and military stability".

Confidence-building has a specific potential for early warning and conflict prevention by creating increased transparency and predictability of military activities. Confidence (and Security-) Building Measures accompanied the CSCE process from the outset, and the first set, that were not obligatory, were enshrined in the Final Act, when it was stated that they should serve the need *"to contribute to reducing the dangers of armed conflict and of misunderstanding or miscalculation of military activities which could give rise to apprehension, particularly in a situation where the participating States lack clear and timely information"*.

The Conference on Confidence- and Security Building Measures and Disarmament (CDE), took place in Stockholm (1984-1986), as mandated by the second CSCE follow-up meeting in Madrid. The Stockholm conference yielded a significant improvement of the CBMs, namely the political obligation to abide by the provisions; lowered thresholds and a longer time frame for the prior notification of military activities, obligatory notifications of military activities and invitations of observers; provisions on annual calendars and constraints and finally compulsory on-site inspection. Though it took eleven years to reach this phase, this development was considered a leap forward as it constituted a whole new generation of CSBMs which to a great extent contributed to the end of the bipolar system.

In November 1990, further negotiations led to the (first) Vienna Document on CSBMs. The scope of mutual information was broadened beyond the area of "dynamic" information on military activities, by providing the obligation for an annual exchange of "static" information on existing forces. Furthermore, the scope of verification was enlarged by providing the obligation to accept evaluation visits of military formations or units. It further provided obligatory invitations to visits to airbases.

In 1992, the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) was established to deal with politico-military aspects of security within the OSCE. It is the body in which all the negotiations about the above-mentioned enhancements and further developments of CSBMs take place on a weekly basis. Apart from this more conceptual task, the FSC is also responsible for overseeing the implementation of CSBMs by all participating States. For that reason, it has established an Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting, in which the FSC, together with experts from capitals, evaluate the overall level of implementation of Vienna Document activities during the previous year.

Since then the Vienna Document has been further developed and updated three times, improving upon existing measures and introducing new ones. As a logical pre-condition for confidence, transparency and security, there is the exchange of information on military forces

including personnel strengths, equipment types and numbers, as well as the locations of troops. In addition, the provision of information on annual defence budgets, budget plans and the dissemination of military doctrines and defence policies greatly contributed to making participating States aware of the military situation within their geographical region and throughout the whole area of application.

In order to ensure the provision of appropriate information by others, participating States have included a variety of verification measures which, *inter alia*, allow participating States to inspect areas or to visit military formations at very short notice with the aim of verifying the information provided. Other measures include visits to airbases or the notification and observation of military activities above a certain threshold of troops or equipment numbers.

For the first time, the Vienna Document 1999 included a chapter on regional measures. Under this, the participating States are encouraged to undertake, including on the basis of separate agreements, in a bilateral, multilateral or regional context measures to increase transparency and confidence.

Taking into account the regional dimension of security, participating States, on a voluntary basis, may therefore complement OSCE-wide confidence- and security-building measures through additional politically or legally binding measures, tailored to specific regional needs.

Numerous measures provided for in the Vienna Document, in particular, could be adapted and applied in a regional context. Participating States may also negotiate additional regional CSBMs. Further it is stated that such measures, apart from being in accordance with the basic OSCE principles, should contribute to strengthening the security and stability of the OSCE area, including the concept of the indivisibility of security, and add to existing transparency and confidence.

Another OSCE document - the Code of Conduct on politico-military aspects of security, adopted at the Budapest Summit in 1994 - has a norm- and standard-setting character. For the first time in OSCE history, participating States went beyond the regulation of mere interstate relations and agreed on political norms governing the conduct of armed forces in both peace and crisis situations. A major cornerstone of this agreement is democratic – civilian - control over the armed forces as well as respect of the international humanitarian law and proportionate and adequate use of force. Under the agreement, participating States are requested to adapt their national legislation to comply with this norm.

Other agreements of the FSC include a Global Exchange of Military Information, providing military data of units stationed outside the OSCE area, and a document on Principles governing Conventional Arms Transfers, together with an information exchange more or less identical to the United Nations Register, to which Thailand also reports on a regular basis.

Beyond the assessment of implementation and enhancement of CSBMs, which is carried out in the two working groups of the FSC, the main task of the weekly Forum meetings is the ongoing Security Dialogue between participating States. During the first half of this year, the situation in South-Eastern Europe remained on the agenda, together with a general debate on the evolution of military doctrines and the role of conventional arms control in Europe. There are also other areas which could be further discussed, especially in the development of the Vienna Document, like certain naval CSBMs or CSBMs covering para-military forces.

The Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons negotiated at the FSC is another contribution to the politico-military dimension of security. The OSCE comprises many of the world's largest small arms suppliers, but also includes a number of regions which have been seriously affected by the spread of small arms. The OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons was developed with both these aspects in mind, and as a result it is extremely comprehensive in its scope – perhaps more comprehensive than any similar document agreed to date by an international organization. Because the document was agreed by consensus, 55 states are now committed to standards for manufacture, marking, export and stockpiling of small arms. They have also agreed to a number of information exchanges. The most important of these is the commitment to share information on all exports to and imports from participating States. This will be the first such exchange in any region. The document also includes a set of measures for use on the ground, as part of the OSCE's activities on early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. We have already begun to look at how these could work.