

SUMMARY REPORT

The OSCE and the Sustainable Development Goals

Vienna, 4 June 2019



Overview

The 2030 Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by world leaders in September 2015 officially came into force on 1 January 2016 following an extensive negotiation process. The SDGs are grouped around five major pillars: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships, and are reviewed regularly by the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The 2019 HLPF will convene around the theme of “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality” and carry out an in depth review of Goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17.

The OSCE has made a link between security and development since the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. Its comprehensive approach to security rests on the recognition that conflicts may arise not only from political and military threats but also from economic tensions, environmental degradation, and social insecurity, as well as deficiencies in relation to the rule of law and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, all relevant for the achievement of the SDGs. Furthermore, since conflict prevention has been central to the OSCE’s work, the organization makes – across its three dimensions - a valuable contribution to the realization of Goal 16, focused on peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice, and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

The OSCE Security Days expert roundtable on “The OSCE and the Sustainable Development Goals” took place on 4 June 2019 at the Vienna International Center in Vienna. More than 170 participants from across the OSCE area engaged in an interactive discussion that highlighted the important and multifaceted role of the OSCE in supporting the implementation of the SDGs. The point was made by several speakers that while the implementation of the SDGs is a responsibility for individual countries in their sustainable development policies, it has been agreed that all countries and all stakeholders will collaborate in implementing Agenda 2030, and that the goals are inter-linked, which is very much in line with the OSCE’s concept of comprehensive security.

At the end of a productive day, there was renewed appreciation for the link between security and development, and the contribution of the OSCE to prevention as well as sustaining peace. It was suggested that more should be done to map and brand what the OSCE is already doing in relation to the SDGs. Furthermore, the OSCE was encouraged to raise the profile of its prevention work, and share best practices with others. It was suggested that the OSCE – as the world’s largest regional security organization – can play a greater role as a bridge between the global and national levels in terms of implementing the SDGs, as well as a facilitator of regional co-operation. It was also suggested that the OSCE look more closely at the impact of climate change on security.

This report summarizes the extensive discussions at the event and the suggestions that emerged from them, with the aim of stimulating possible follow up.



Relevance of the SDGs to the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security

The opening remarks highlighted that the **OSCE's comprehensive approach to security matches the requirement for the implementation of the 17 SDGs goals to be inclusive**. Security cannot be measured simply with guns, tanks and troops, but areas like good governance, trade, human rights, and the environment are just as crucial. **The OSCE as the world's largest regional security organization can (and does) play an important role in helping the 57 participating States to implement the SDGs with its toolbox, expertise and knowledge on the ground**. But there is no time to lose; all stakeholders need to move faster, which implies more financing, more commitments, more partnerships, and more action. The OSCE's contribution to almost all SDGs was highlighted through concrete examples for each of the five "Ps" in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.

The keynote speeches focused on the history of the SDGs and their implementation, as well as the OSCE's role. **Agenda 2030 represents a new paradigm of development**, emphasizing inclusiveness and sustainability, and going beyond the idea of development co-operation of the past. This encourages building global partnerships and coalitions involving various interested actors to implement the goals: national governments, international and regional organizations, private sector, civil society, and academia. In this regard, the OSCE is a natural partner at the regional level. It offers a platform to bridge national and global agendas. With its institutions, field operations and activities that reinforce transboundary co-operation, it has capacities to support SDG implementation on a national level, and to foster regional cooperation. It can also help to build capacity and facilitate sharing of good practices. Spain presented its implementation of the SDGs on the national level, serving as a good example of sharing best national practices within the OSCE.

The **innovative character of SDG 16** (peace, justice and strong institutions) was raised as – recognizing that violent conflict inhibits development – **it also introduced peace and security to traditional economic, social and environmental dimensions of the UN's sustainable development concept**. This required a compromise between the "global North" and the "global South" in the process of drafting the documents, founded in domestic focus of implementing the goals, and linkage of peace to the fostering of inclusive societies, among others.

Generally, there are **significant commonalities between the SDGs and the OSCE's commitments and mandates**. Both the OSCE and the UN focus on peace and security, prevention, protection of human rights and a rules-based order. What the OSCE does within its region, the UN does globally. The SDGs crystalize consensus among 193 countries on how to achieve a peaceful and prosperous planet and the OSCE is seeking the same within its region. The SDGs represent an integrated agenda of interlinked aims. No real transformation is achievable unless these interlinkages are all recognized and acted upon. And the OSCE is a very important partner in this respect, with its comprehensive concept and leadership from the outset.

With the support of the participating States, the **OSCE can contribute to Agenda 2030 by promoting implementation of the SDGs by its 57 participating States, including by raising awareness of the responsibility that comes with these goals**. No limitation is set on the capacity of regional

organizations to report to the HLPF on implementation of SDGs. The OSCE may have a role here, also serving as a platform for peer learning, mutual support, exchange of best practices, voluntary regional reviews and voluntarily set targets. It was also stated that due to the integrated, interconnected and non-politicized nature of the SDGs, the OSCE should support their implementation in a non-selective manner.

Sustaining Peace and Conflict Prevention (Goal 16)

SDG 16 is about the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Increasing geopolitical tensions, ethnic divisions, inequality, weak democratic institutions, the rise of nationalism and populism, freedom of media and assembly restrictions, and environmental risks and tensions all have an impact on the implementation of this goal, also in the OSCE area. With security and development closely linked, a holistic approach is necessary. Societies affected by exclusionary policies, democratic deficits, ethnic, religious, and sectarian differences have a higher risk of escalation into conflict and violence.

The OSCE's comprehensive approach to security rests on the recognition that root causes and drivers of violent conflicts can be found in all three dimensions of security. With its strong focus on conflict prevention, in particular through the work of its institutions and field operations, the **OSCE is well-placed to address such root causes**, and help strengthen national capacities for prevention. This was described as "structural" prevention. SDG 16 represents a key factor for achieving conflict prevention. It was mentioned that Security Sector Governance/Reform, in turn, could be seen as one of the OSCE's areas of engagement that contributes to achieving SDG 16.

For **ODIHR**, democratic governance, human rights, and effective and accountable/representative decision-making are values closely integrated into its work. ODIHR thus plays an important role in helping participating States to implement the various sub-targets of **SDG 16**. With regard to the rule of law and access to justice, it supports judicial and legislative reforms, promotes criminal justice reform and accountability. ODIHR works closely with national parliaments, for example, to increase accountability and promote oversight of security and defence institutions. Through its legislative reviews, it assists participating States in ensuring laws on human dimension topics meet their OSCE commitments and other international obligations.

Conflict prevention also lies at the core of the activities of the **HCNM's** efforts to identify issues relating to national minorities. In line with the spirit of the SDGs, this work has to be done comprehensively; for instance, education should promote integration rather than division and segregation. Supporting minority languages – for instance the ability of media and individuals to use their own languages in society – also plays an important role. There is a need for long-term policies and strong vision to implement **SDG 16**, leading toward long-term sustainable development.

The session featured **North Macedonia** as an example of the role of OSCE field operations in supporting national priorities and thereby contributing to the implementation of the SDGs. This included the OSCE's engagement and efforts to promote dialogue during the 2017 political crisis as



well as the Mission to Skopje's long-term support for the independence of the judiciary, electoral process improvement, and the promotion of effective and accountable institutions. The Mission's early warning role and its capacity to defuse tensions, including through mediation and dialogue facilitation at the local level, was recognized as providing it with a unique ability to support the implementation of SDG 16. Again, education reform is an important part of efforts to promote inter-community relations. The Mission to Skopje has contributed to policy discussions that led to a new education strategy, which took steps to connect students even as schools become more segregated.

UNSCR 1325 on **Women, Peace and Security** has a strong focus on conflict prevention, which is a theme that continues in **SDG 5** on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. It is a top priority for the UN, but much work remains. Peace and security is still a very masculine domain, although millions of women work on a daily basis for peace. **UN WOMEN** work on the implementation of **SDGs 16 and 5** through several tools, including promoting women's participation as inclusivity is seen as a key factor to sustaining peace and implementing the SDGs. Discriminatory legislation needs to be eliminated and non-discrimination policies implemented. More efforts are needed to address the continuing low representation of women in track 1 processes in which the OSCE is involved. Another theme is to provide technical gender expertise. For instance, conflict analyses must better assess gender aspects, such as analysing which groups are promoting peace and which are acting as spoilers. Gender sensitive societies are more resilient with a lower risk of conflict.

The role of **UNHCR**, and the importance of displacement being taken into account throughout the conflict cycle, was also brought up. The office works closely with the OSCE especially in the Geneva International Discussions and with the Minsk Group, as well as the Special Monitoring Mission and the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine. This co-operation also includes joint capacity-building for OSCE and UNHCR staff in the field, based on a "Protection Checklist" jointly produced by UNHCR and the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre.

In the **discussion** that ensued, some participants highlighted the universality of the SDGs and the supporting role of international organizations, including in particular the OSCE with its role widely applauded. It can even be said that it functions as a "role model" for regional organizations. In terms of a mandate to help implement the SDGs, it was also noted that – while only the participating States can change mandates – there is "room for manoeuvre" in interpreting and applying them. It is the responsibility of Heads of Institutions to adjust methodologies, with transparency and accountability.

Others pointed out the **key role of the HLPF in assessing progress and conducting interim assessments**. Dedicated OSCE reporting on SDG implementation would possibly need a specific mandate, although a mechanism for OSCE structures to report to participating States, which could then incorporate this work into their own reporting, could be foreseen.

While this event focused mainly on three SDGs, **the OSCE makes a significant contribution also in its second and third dimensions**, for instance to support the implementation of **SDG 8**. In addition, the importance of equal access to justice for vulnerable groups was raised. The OSCE Transnational

Threats Department's capacity-building work was highlighted. It focuses on addressing root causes of violence and conflicts, and to enhance the role of women as professionals rather than only as victims, including in the criminal justice sector.

The **role of youth** is a theme permeating throughout the SDGs. There are some indications of a decrease rather than an increase in youth participation in decision and policy-making in the OSCE area. Hence, the OSCE has been active in supporting youth participation both through its executive structures and in the field.

Conclusions and recommendations:

- Increasing geopolitical tensions make the implementation of SDG 16 more difficult, but make the OSCE's prevention work as well as its role as a platform for dialogue and multilateral problem-solving more relevant.
- The SDGs and the OSCE's commitments and principles fit well together, and the other way around. The OSCE is well-placed in supporting its participating States in implementing the SDGs but needs to consider ways to demonstrate more effectively what it already does to this end.
- OSCE has a certain flexibility in responding to crises, combined with structural and systematic approaches to addressing root causes, all providing it with good tools to help implement SDG 16.
- OSCE has relevant experience of creating and fostering partnerships, which could be shared among other regional organizations.
- Gender and youth are crossing cutting issues, both for the SDGs and for the work of the OSCE and should therefore be mainstreamed more effectively. There is a need to work toward greater women's participation in peace and security work.
- The role of civil society in promoting peace should be supported.
- It could be useful to reflect on ways that challenges have been addressed, to develop recommendations that stem from best practices and lessons learned, advice from recognized experts.

Climate and security (Goal 13)

SDG 13 calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impact, and the relevant session focused in particular on the relationship between climate change and security. It was noted that climate action is an SDG that impacts on many other goals, which is again why all SDGs need to be considered holistically.

It was observed **that this issue is receiving growing attention**, not least because of **the increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events** as well as slower onset phenomenon like

desertification and the melting of glaciers. It was noted that a leading indicator of the increased risks posed by extreme weather conditions is a significant increase in relevant insurance premiums. The problem is becoming more visible and acute. **Decisive action is urgently needed to enhance climate change adaptation and mitigation** at all levels.

Examples of multilateral responses to combatting climate change include: the Paris Agreement; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development; and the New Urban Agenda.

While the international community has made significant progress in building political frameworks for climate action, **there has been less progress in addressing security risks linked to climate change.** Such action is necessary since climate change is not only a challenge to sustainable development, **but is also a threat multiplier** – for example, triggering major population shifts and competition for food and water resources, which can have an impact on stability. Examples cited included the close link between a rise in the food price index and political unrest, as well as how increased competition for water can be a “driver of displacement”. It was recommended that **risks associated with these trends in the OSCE area could be assessed early on with predictive models based on big data.** This would be **consistent with the OSCE’s long-standing focus on prevention, early warning, and early action.**

While there’s no consensus among UN Member States in recognizing climate change as a “universal challenge” in the context of international security, since 2007 there have been four formal debates in the UN Security Council on the impact of climate change on security, as well as a number of informal briefings and meetings. The issue has also been addressed extensively by the Council of the European Union, which has issued multiple Conclusions on “Climate Diplomacy” since 2007.

The climate change/security nexus is not yet a mainstream issue on the OSCE’s security agenda. Participating States are not on the same page with regard to the Organization’s role or mandate on this field. It was emphasized that building on its engagement in this field since 2007, the **OSCE could be used more effectively as a platform for raising awareness and fostering dialogue on climate change and security.** Furthermore, there could be more scope for the OSCE to carry out activities in participating States and at a regional level to address the impact of environmental issues on security. The OSCE’s engagement in climate security risk assessments that have been carried out in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the South Caucasus together with its partners in the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) was cited as an example of a good practice for demonstrating the security benefits of joint action.

The role of **UNHCR** in addressing climate change-related displacement was also highlighted, particularly with regard to the applicability of relevant refugee law frameworks, raising awareness, and enhancing response capacities of States.

The **impact of climate change in one participating State, namely Georgia, was highlighted,** along with national responses. It was noted that coping with the impact of climate changes – like landslides, flooding and forest fires – had become “the new normal”. In response, Georgia is

preparing a national climate action plan based on a whole-of-government approach as well as a national disaster risk reduction strategy. An environmental ombudsman institution has also recently been established. Reference was made to the good collaboration between Georgia and the OSCE in addressing environment and security challenges through fostering transboundary water cooperation, climate change risk assessment, wildfire management and the Aarhus Centre, which provide significant contributions towards achievement of the SDGs.

It was suggested that the **OSCE could, at a minimum, help raise awareness of the impact of climate change on security at a high political level, and support governments to take action individually and collectively.** An appeal was also made for everyone, on a personal level, to get involved and do their part to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Conclusions and recommendations

- Sustainable development and climate action are closely linked.
- There's an increasing debate on how climate change impacts security, and what to do about it.
- Reducing and managing the risks associated with climate change require multilateral cooperation, including through water diplomacy and disaster risk reduction.
- The OSCE has the tools and track record to apply prevention, early warning and early action tools to address climate-related issues within its area.
- The OSCE together with its partners has valuable experience in carrying out climate security risk assessments and developing and supporting transboundary adaptation measures. This model could be replicated in other regions, and used as a means for identifying needs and strengthening national capacities and regional responses.
- There is, as yet, no clear political recognition of the impact of climate change on security in a consensus-based OSCE document. Rectifying this lacuna could be a first step in strengthening a political response among participating States.

Perspectives on the OSCE's Role in promoting the SDGs – recommendations for the future (Goal 17)

The focus of SDG 17 is on strengthening global partnerships to achieve the targets of the 2030 Agenda, bringing together national governments, the international community, civil society, the private sector and other actors. The current challenges of multilateralism have led to the SDG progress report indicating **particularly weak implementation of this goal.** With the lack of adequate engagement by political actors, there is an urgent need to re-link institutions, such as parliaments, to the people. This is something the **OSCE Parliamentary Assembly** has been working on, for instance through technical support to parliaments, training of politicians etc. It was observed that a fundamental change is needed in the way the political elites are thinking if the most innovative ideas

for tackling climate change come from a Swedish teenager and an Austrian former actor. **Increased cooperation is the only way to tackle global challenges.**

For the **OSCE's second dimension** on economic and environmental issues, the **Maastricht Strategy of 2003 with its dedicated section on sustainable development** clearly stated that increased co-operation among the participating States could make a substantial contribution to tackling emerging economic and environmental challenges and threats to security. After Maastricht, several Ministerial Council decisions followed suit – including with references to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs – such as the Hamburg decision on strengthening good governance and promoting connectivity (4/16) and the Milan declaration on the digital economy (2/18). In the OSCE's second dimension, there are already a number of action-oriented partnerships with UN agencies and others. There are also some interesting examples within the **OSCE's cross-dimensional** sphere, where it has pushed for increased international co-operation and development through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT).

The benefits of field-level partnerships can be illustrated by the **UNDP presence in Ukraine**, which is one of its biggest field operations. Co-operation between UNDP and the OSCE was seen as natural as it could even be said that the OSCE Helsinki Final Act was a forerunner of Agenda 2030, paving the way for addressing more hands-on human rights and development issues. The big change from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the SDGs was that when the implementation of the former was the responsibility of development actors, the implementation of the SDGs is a responsibility for individual countries in their sustainable development policies, and that all countries and all stakeholders will collaborate in implementing Agenda 2030. This also means that UNDP's role is now less pronounced for SDGs than MDGs and that classical development aid will, on its own, not be enough for fundamental change.

Conclusions and recommendations

- Implementation of the SDGs is founded on the responsibility of individual states, but also necessitates well-working multilateralism.
- Partnerships need to develop beyond coordination and discussions from various silos to achieve concrete change and interconnectedness.
- The efficient implementation of the SDGs will require a “whole-of-society approach”, collaboration at all levels (international, regional, national and local) as well as new and innovative partnerships
- Supporting cross-border activities such as trade and energy connectivity as well as water diplomacy is also crucial and the OSCE is already working on this.
- Development is about changing mind-sets – therefore leadership is crucial.

Summary

- There must be a greater sense of urgency in the implementation of the SDGs, particularly in relation to climate change and security;
- The OSCE can be a catalyst. There is a particular need to support the work of participating States in assessing and addressing the repercussions of climate change on security;
- Different from the MDGs, the implementation of the SDGs is the responsibility for individual countries in their sustainable development policies. However, all stakeholders should collaborate in implementing Agenda 2030;
- Hence, the OSCE has a distinct role in supporting all participating States in their implementation of the SDGs and there is a clear need to – in a non-selective way – systematically map and brand its SDG-related activities;
- Where possible, in this context it should be considered how the OSCE could, in its everyday programmatic work, highlight this support;
- The profile of the OSCE's prevention work as well as the role of the executive structures in supporting the implementation of SDG 16 through both structural and operational means; should be raised, and the OSCE should share its best practices with other regional organizations;
- The OSCE's role as a facilitator and platform to bridge global and national implementation should be accentuated to enhance regional co-operation in the implementation of the SDGs;
- The OSCE should continue to leverage partnerships in the spirit of the SDGs following the good examples of ICAT and ENVSEC, and;
- Participating States and the Chair could highlight the role of the OSCE in relation to the SDGs at the HLPF in July 2019 and the UN Summit on the SDGs in September 2019.

ANNEX 1

The OSCE and the Sustainable Development Goals

4 June 2019,

Vienna International Centre, C Building, 7th floor, CR-3

09:00 – 09:15 *Registration and welcome coffee*

09:15 – 10:00 **Welcome**

Miwa Kato, *Director, Division for Operations at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*
Video message from Miroslav Lajčák, *OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic*
Thomas Greminger, *OSCE Secretary General*

Keynote remarks: *Why are the SDGs relevant to the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security?*

David Donoghue, *Chair of the Board, Conciliation Resources*
Victoria González Román, *Ambassador for the 2030 Agenda, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, Spain*

10:00 – 12:30 **Sustaining Peace and Conflict Prevention (Goal 16)**

Moderator: Marcel Pesko, *Director, OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre*
Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, *Director, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights*
Lamberto Zannier, *OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities*
Clemens Koja, *Head of Mission, OSCE Mission to Skopje*
Päivi Kannisto, *Chief, Women, Peace and Security, UN Women*

12:30 – 13:30 *Lunch*

13:30 – 15:00 **Climate and security (Goal 13)**

Moderator: Esra Buttari, *Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities*
Alexander Verbeek, *Founder, Institute for Planetary Security*
Nino Tandilashvili, *Deputy Minister, Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia*

15:00 – 15:30 *Coffee break*

15:30 – 17:00 **Perspectives on the OSCE's Role in promoting the SDGs – recommendations for the future (Goal 17)**

Moderator: Martin Nesirky, *Director, UN Information Service*
Nilza de Sena, *Chair of the Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly*
Erhard Busek, *Special Coordinator, Southeast European Cooperative Initiative*



Vuk Žugić, *Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities*
Marcus Brand, *Senior Advisor, United Nations Development Programme in Ukraine*

17:00 – 17:30 **Conclusion:** Thomas Greminger, *OSCE Secretary General*