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- The discussions within the Corfu Process and during the 2010 Review Conference indicated that the participating States would like a more structured involvement of the OSCE in early warning activities. One could ask then why despite almost 20 years of experience on these matters, the OSCE has still not yet managed to create a viable, functional and effective system in this area?
- Part of the answer might be that so far the Organization has only been applying a piecemeal approach to this issue. Early warning activities have been performed by various actors, particularly the institutions and field operations, but what has clearly been lacking is the capacity to systematically process various early warning signals relevant to all three dimensions of security as a whole;
- Against this background, three fundamental questions need to be addressed:
 1. What should be the main features of a comprehensive early warning system within the OSCE?
 2. What should be its constitutive elements?
 3. How does one construct such a system, including what should be the first steps the participating States and the executive structures might wish to take?

The main features of an enhanced early warning system

- In answering the question on what should be the characteristics of the future system, one should not ignore the realities and particularly the institutional set-up and operational practices of the Organization;
- Although, the idea of devising a system from scratch is perhaps intellectually stimulating nevertheless due to various factors and practical ramifications its implementation would be very difficult, if at all possible. This is why, it seems more reasonable to focus on how to use to its fullest potential the already existing elements and also identifying areas for improvement therein;
- First of all it would be of crucial importance to find a way to link early warning activities of various OSCE structures into one co-ordinated effort, while preserving the autonomy of the activities of executive structures. Thus, **the first feature of the system would be its co-ordinated character**;

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- The Conflict Prevention Centre is arguably best placed to provide a co-ordinating framework for the OSCE's efforts in this field. One of the main functions which the Centre could play in this respect would be to facilitate the contributions of other executive structures towards a comprehensive analysis of developments that might lead to potential conflicts and/or crises;
- **Secondly**, as security in the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok is indivisible, **the focus of the OSCE early warning system should be of a pan-regional and cross-thematic character**, and due attention should be paid not only to factors of domestic nature, but also to transnational threats to security. There should be no off-limits areas or subjects for the early warning activities within the Organization. This does not mean that equal attention must be paid at any given time to developments in every and each sub-region of the OSCE area. The level of attention and scrutiny of the situation at hand, would depend on the extent and character of the identified challenges. But as a general rule all the participating States would need to accept that the OSCE will analyze security-related developments taking place on their territory, and assume a commitment to facilitate the activities of the early warning network, including by offering pertinent information and active support;
- **Thirdly, the activities of the system should be subjected to the oversight of the OSCE Chairmanship.** Matters under review within the early warning network would often be of a highly sensitive, sometimes politicized character. This is why, given the character of responsibilities and division of labour within the OSCE, it should be the responsibility of the Chairmanship to decide what actions should be taken with regard to early warning reports generated by the system;
- In particular, the Chairmanship would decide on how and when to share information with and involve all the participating States in activities related to early warning alerts received and collected from such a system. This does not mean that the Secretary General or the Director of the CPC should not be authorised to alert the participating States to specific potential threats. However, if such competences are given to the Secretariat, they should always be exercised in close interaction with the Chairmanship;
- In addition to this, the network could provide periodic reports to the OSCE decision-making bodies and the ASRC on general trends related to the conflict potential in the OSCE area. Such reports could then constitute the basis for focused debates among participating States on issues related to the OSCE's role in early warning and conflict prevention;
- **Fourthly**, in creating and operating the early warning system, the OSCE should **build on the existing knowledge, support and, whenever appropriate, substantive inputs of its major partner organizations and institutions.** This is necessary both to learn from the experiences of other structures involved in similar activities and as a way to ensure the most cost-effective manner of implementing the early warning functions. Similarly, close interaction should also be established with reputable external research institutions, think-tanks and experts in the field of early warning.

Building-blocks of the system

- The first principle element of the enhanced early warning system would be the **collection of information pertaining to all three dimensions of security**. For this activity to be efficient, relevant methodology defining what kind of information should be collected, by whom, how and to whom it should be transferred, would need to be defined within the network;
- As a general rule, it seems that information should be compiled and gathered from as many sources as possible, including from the OSCE's staff, other international actors, media, NGO's and academia;
- **Secondly**, once collected **the information should be analysed**, or in other words, put within the context of security-related developments in the OSCE area, while focusing on the potential for destabilizing developments. Of particular importance would be to ensure a multi-dimensional approach to analysing the available information. For this a viable mechanisms for ensuring close interaction among various OSCE executive structures would need to be introduced;
- Moreover, standard operating procedures to verify, classify, organize, retrieve and share relevant information would need to be established and implemented by all the elements of the early warning framework. That would be of particular importance given the cross-dimensional character of the OSCE and the multitude of actors who would be involved in the analysis of pertinent information;
- **Thirdly**, from the perspective of the entire Organization, the ultimate purpose of early warning reports would be not just to raise awareness, but also to facilitate an adequate response action. This is why it would seem imperative that, as a rule, **the early warning reports should be complemented by recommendations for future action to be carried out by the OSCE**. The link between the early warning and early action is crucial and will have to be fully taken into consideration in the process of developing the new early warning framework. The upcoming discussion on early action issues in the *V to V dialogue* format will be an opportunity to focus on this subject.

Building the system

- There is no need to start from scratch, as early warning is a part of OSCE "genetic code." The question is rather **how to link effectively the already existing elements into one efficient and easy-to-run system**. At the same time, the role that might be played by possible new tools, such as thematic missions and roving teams would also need to be considered. If created, such instruments might be used in a crisis management context particularly when and where there is no OSCE field operation present on the ground or the subject in question goes beyond the mandate of the existing field operation;
- In the process of elaborating future early warning activities one would need to display a great deal of pragmatism and try to achieve what is feasible. This is why a combination of two complementary sets of measures at a macro and micro levels could be applied. On the one hand, the OSCE could continue working on general aspects of the future comprehensive early warning system. On the other hand,

practical, small improvements of the current practices could be implemented in the nearest future.

Concept development

- Starting with the macro level. As suggested by Ambassador Salber in his 15 March address to the *V to V dialogue* meeting, a comprehensive concept on early warning capabilities of the OSCE executive structures could be developed. Such a concept could take into account some of the ideas I raised today, on the condition that participating States all agree on just what kind of a system they would like to establish;
- But who should work out such a concept? In my opinion, this should be a result of interaction within the multi faceted structure formed by the participating States, the OSCE Secretariat, particularly the CPC and the so-called “thematic units”, and the other executives structures, notably the institutions and field operations. A structured involvement of all the relevant actors in this activity would ensure the sense of ownership among them, thus in the longer-term facilitate the implementation of the new early warning framework.

Small steps in parallel

- Concerning the micro level, I believe that **various measures** improving the early warning capacity of the Organization **could be implemented by the relevant OSCE executive structures within the limits of their competences** and no specific decisions by the participating States would be necessary for this. Other steps that could be taken in the nearest future would require decisions by the Permanent Council, particularly if they are linked to reorganization of the post table or budgetary transfers;
- There is no need to cluster together all possible improvements and wait with their implementation until the overall early warning concept is ready. Specific issues could be dealt with and decided upon whenever the matter becomes sufficiently mature, or whenever the participating States manage to achieve common understanding on them;
- That would certainly concern such measures as:
 - ✓ devoting more CPC resources to analytical activities while reducing the time spent on administrative tasks;
 - ✓ implementing a better system of co-ordination and information sharing among executive structures;
 - ✓ ensuring a better co-ordination of so called thematic Units of the OSCE Secretariat; and
 - ✓ reinforcing targeted co-operation with outside partners.
- The introduction of such adjustments would not only improve current capacity of executive structures to identify threats and challenges to security, but would also prepare ground for and facilitate the implementation of the overall early warning concept once it is approved.

Funding

- Usually ‘fresh ideas’ are confronted with the question: “Who is goanna pay for that?” In other words, in light of the informal yet powerful principle of the “zero nominal growth” which seems to be defining the budgetary practices of the OSCE, the resource question might be a serious impediment for the creation of an OSCE comprehensive early warning framework;
- Certainly, some additional human and financial resources would be required. But from the perspective of the entire Organization this problem might possibly be considerably less acute than one might think;
- If the participating States concur that an early warning system is a priority, a consolidation of available resources should be considered. This would certainly require a reprioritisation and reorientation of the activities of some OSCE staff, primarily but not exclusively within the CPC, and a change of organizational culture at the OSCE level;
- Concerning the latter, one should remember that thousands of people work for the OSCE, yet only a small part of them is actively involved in efforts aimed at identifying early warning signals or potential threats to the stability of the OSCE area. To change this one would need to ensure a more comprehensive approach to early warning activities. The staff should be made aware that since the OSCE’s primary focus is conflict prevention and resolution, they are expected to provide substantive input into these efforts of the Organization. This should concern all staff working on non-technical matters, including those whose main role is project implementation or capacity building activities;
- In all likelihood, even if consolidation of available resources takes place, some additional, hopefully limited, funds would still be needed. However, this would not necessarily result in an increase of the global figure of the OSCE Unified Budget, as funds assigned to some other activities might be slightly reduced in the context of the next year’s budgets.

To conclude,

- What seems certain is that implementation of a comprehensive early warning system would be a long-term endeavour requiring a very strong commitment and resolve of the participating States and executive structures. But if the Organization wants to live up to its role of a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, it must improve its capacities in conflict prevention and management, including through the development of a comprehensive early warning capability.