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**Chairmanship: Serbia**

**REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE  
CONTACT GROUP WITH THE ASIAN PARTNERS FOR  
CO-OPERATION TO THE TWENTY-SECOND MEETING OF THE  
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

The 2015 Swiss Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group assisted the Serbian OSCE Chairmanship in its activities to promote an open and interactive dialogue between the OSCE and the Partners for Co-operation following a demand-driven approach and responding to the interests and priorities of the Asian Partners. The focus of this year's work with the Asian Partners was to identify areas for concrete joint activities and opportunities for enhanced institutional exchange between the OSCE and Asian security mechanisms.

During the course of the year, five meetings of the Asian Contact Group were held in Vienna. Each meeting focused on a topic proposed by one of the Asian Partner countries. The meetings provided a valuable platform for information exchange and dialogue between OSCE participating States and the Asian Partners. The subjects of the five meetings were jointly selected by the Chairmanship and the Asian Partners and gave a broad overview over topics of interest to the individual Asian Partner countries.

The first meeting of the Asian Contact Group was held on 13 March 2015 and was dedicated to the situation on the Korean peninsula and the Republic of Korea's unification policy. The first presentation on "The Situation on the Korean Peninsula – the Republic of Korea's Policy for Peace and Unification" was held by Mr. Kim Yong-Hyun, Deputy Director General for North Korean Nuclear Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea. It was followed by a presentation of Ambassador Fred Tanner, Senior Adviser to the OSCE Secretary General, on the topic of "German Unification, Détente Policy and the Building of Confidence and Security in Europe". The main conclusions of the meeting were that the denuclearization and peaceful unification of Korea are essential to creating stability in the region, and that dialogue and confidence-building measures (CBMs) are central to achieving stability and a climate of trust and predictability. The OSCE was referred to as an excellent platform for the facilitation of dialogue and trust-building.

The second meeting of the Asian Contact Group on the topic of cybersecurity took place on 20 April 2015. Mr. Henry Fox, Director of Cyber and Space Policy Section, Strategic Issues and Intelligence Branch at the International Security Division of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade presented on "Cyber Confidence-Building: The ASEAN Regional Forum experience". Mr. Ben Hiller, Cyber Security Officer at the Transnational Threats Department of the OSCE Secretariat held a presentation on "Promoting Interregional Confidence-Building to Reduce the Risks of Conflict Stemming from the Use of ICTs". Both speakers highlighted the importance of confidence-building measures in the area of cybersecurity, while the first set of OSCE cyber

CBMs was referred to as an important step forward. The speakers suggested pursuing an enhanced co-ordination of activities of the OSCE and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) as well as organizing a specific cybersecurity event with the Asian Partners.

The third meeting of the Contact Group was held on 19 May 2015 on the topic of the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai and its outcome for the OSCE. Mr. Kaoru Saito, Director of the Disaster Preparedness and International Co-operation Division at the Disaster Management Bureau of the Cabinet Office of the Government of Japan and organizer of the Sendai Conference, held a presentation on “World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management in Japan”. A second presentation on “Disaster Risk Reduction: The global «Sendai» momentum from a Swiss perspective” was held by Mr. Philipp Beutler, Deputy Head of the Multilateral Division at the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. Ms. Esra Buttanri, Senior Environmental Affairs Adviser in the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) informed about “Disaster Risk Reduction in an OSCE context”. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 was described as an important guideline for the work of the OSCE. The speakers noted that preventive measures and investment, interregional co-operation and political will are central for effective disaster risk reduction. It was also noted that disaster risk reduction should be included into the international development agenda.

On 1 and 2 June 2015 the 2015 OSCE Asian Conference took place in Seoul, Republic of Korea. Co-organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea and the OSCE, the conference focused on “The Changing Global Security Environment and Visions of Multilateral Security Co-operation in Asia”. For the first time, the event was attended by several ministers, with the Foreign Ministers of Korea, Switzerland and Thailand delivering keynote addresses at the opening of the conference. The three thematic sessions reflected the OSCE’s three dimensions of security. More specifically, discussions in the first session focused on how to counter evolving threats such as foreign terrorist fighters and terrorism and violent extremism and how to enhance co-operation among regional organizations to promote tolerance and non-discrimination. The second session focused on potential areas of co-operation between the OSCE and the Asian Partners, more specifically on global efforts and regional co-operation to enhance disaster risk reduction and best practices on developing confidence-building measures in the area of cybersecurity. The third session explored the relevance of the Helsinki Final Act and the 1990 Paris Charter for co-operative security in Asia as well as possibilities for strengthening institutional co-operation between existing security mechanisms in Europe and Asia as well as co-operation with new regional initiatives, including the Northeast Asia Peace and Co-operation Initiative (NAPCI). All topics were discussed with a view as to how to enhance and strengthen co-operation and exchange between the OSCE and the Asian Partners.

The role of NAPCI in Northeast Asia and the importance of multilateral security co-operation, including between the OSCE and NAPCI, was the topic of a side event organized by the Republic of Korea on 2 June.

The Swiss Chair and the Serbian Chairmanship of the OSCE issued a perception paper, which was consulted with the Asian Partners and which outlines the main conclusions of the 2015 OSCE Asian Conference. It was distributed to OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation under PC.DEL/1553/15.

The fourth meeting of the Asian Contact Group took place on 11 September 2015 on the topic “From CSBMs to Conflict Prevention – OSCE and ASEAN Experience”. Ambassador Arthayudh Srisamoot, Permanent Representative of Thailand to the OSCE and former Director-General of the Department of ASEAN Affairs in the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, informed the participants on “Development of ASEAN Confidence-Building Measures, Preventive Diplomacy and Areas for Co-operation”. Dr. Pierre von Arx, Head of Security Policy at the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the OSCE held a presentation on “The Development of OSCE CSBMs”. The meeting showed that CSBMs and CBMs are regarded as a central tool for conflict prevention both by the OSCE and by ASEAN, and that an exchange in this area between the two organizations would be beneficial. Furthermore, Ambassador Song Young-wan, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the OSCE made a presentation on the achievements and follow-ups of the OSCE Asian Conference in Seoul. It was noted that there is potential for concrete co-operation between the OSCE region and Asia, for instance in the areas of counter-terrorism, disaster risk reduction and cybersecurity.

The fifth meeting of the Contact Group was held on 16 October 2015 on the topic “Afghanistan in Transformation”. Ambassador Ayoob M. Erfani, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the OSCE, held a presentation on “Afghanistan’s Decade of Transformation and Gender Dynamics”, followed by a presentation on “The Afghan Refugee Solutions Strategy – Why Now?” by Mr. Ayaki Ito, Deputy Director of the UNHCR Bureau for Asia and the Pacific in Geneva. It was noted that Afghanistan had made great progress in terms of democratic development and gender equality since 2001, but that support by the international community in the areas of consultation, training and equipment was still needed. Also with regard to the Afghan refugee situation, the speakers emphasized the importance of support by the international community for Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries, as well as the need for combining humanitarian and development measures to create favourable conditions for voluntary returns. It was highlighted that the OSCE could positively contribute to the transformation process of Afghanistan through its experience and expertise, for instance in the area of gender equality.

In 2015, the OSCE-Asian Partnership for Co-operation celebrated its twentieth anniversary. On this occasion, the OSCE Secretariat published a booklet on “The OSCE Asian Partnership for Co-operation – Reflections and Perspectives”, illustrating the history of the Partnership, compiling relevant documents and showcasing a series of concrete projects realized through this co-operation. The Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the OSCE provided the funding for the publication and together with the Office of the OSCE Secretary General/Section for External Co-operation organized the official launch of the publication on 5 November 2015 in Vienna, followed by a reception.

The Asian Contact Group meetings in Vienna and, in particular, the OSCE Asian Conference in Seoul have highlighted the potential and interest in further strengthening the Partnership through promoting exchange and common projects in specific thematic areas such as counter-terrorism, disaster risk reduction and cybersecurity, and to further strengthening and institutionalizing the co-operation mechanisms between the OSCE and Asian co-operative security mechanisms such as ASEAN/ARF, NAPCI and the Trilateral Co-operation Secretariat.

In this context it would be worth following up on the suggestion of organizing a cybersecurity seminar with the Asian Partners.