

V to V Dialogue' on the Conflict Cycle:

1st Expert Meeting on “Enhancing the Early Warning and Analytical Capacity of the OSCE”

15 April 2011

Chair’s Perception

The 1st Expert Meeting within the Framework of the Conflict Cycle – V to V Dialogue, “Enhancing the Early Warning and Analytical Capacity of the OSCE,” took place on 15 April 2011 in Vienna. The Chairmanship’s letter of invitation, with attached concept note, was distributed under CIO.GAL/46/11 on 23 March 2011. An agenda and a background note were prepared for the 1st Expert Meeting and distributed by the Chairmanship on 14 April 2011 under CIO.GAL/65/11. The background note provided a preliminary stock-taking, identified strengths and weaknesses in the existing early warning and analytical capacity of the OSCE, and explored possible ways forward on policy and operational aspects of further enhancing such a capacity.

A five-speaker panel, which included Professor John Packer (Director of the Human Rights Centre, University of Essex), Mr. Pascal Heyman (Deputy Director for Policy Support Service, OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre), Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris (Director of the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities), Mr. Jaroslaw Pietrusiewicz (First Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the OSCE), and Mr. Johnny Engell-Hansen (Head of Operations Division, EU Situation Centre), provided stimulating ideas and enriched the discussions that followed.

Panelists highlighted the importance of a solid early warning and analytical capacity for regional organizations like the OSCE, which have to address and manage a range of security issues. There was consensus that many early warning tools were already available within the OSCE executive structures but that better co-ordination was required within and among these structures to share and analyze information and to assure a multi-dimensional approach to early warning. Panelists also pointed to the nexus between early warning and early action, pointing to the importance not only of appropriate analysis and policy recommendations but also timely action. While additional resources would be necessary over time, much could already be done within existing budgetary constraints.

Various recommendations were offered on both the micro- and macro-level as to how participating States and the OSCE executive structures could remain actively engaged over the next several months on this topic. On the micro-level, the executive structures could already proceed to work on more effective co-ordination in the information-gathering and analysis process, including by strengthening co-operation with OSCE international partners, while on the macro-level, participating States could agree to develop a comprehensive concept on an OSCE early warning capacity. Such work could be done within a special ad

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hoc working group consisting of experts from the participating States and designated representatives from the OSCE executive structures. A structured follow-on approach would be the key to facilitating further discussions on enhancing the early warning and analytical capability of the Organization.

In their interventions, participants noted their appreciation for the varied perspectives provided by the panelists, with several delegates expressing support for some of the recommendations the panelists proposed. In general, participants underscored that the OSCE already possessed many mechanisms for early warning but that there was a need to use them more effectively and efficiently. They also addressed a number of political, operational, structural, and institutional issues related to early warning, including linking early warning to early action, processing information so as to ensure quality and timely analysis, maintaining confidentiality, defining the scope of early warning, and avoiding unnecessary duplication in data gathering as there were already enough external actors engaged in such activities.

Some participants indicated that consideration should be given to setting up a follow-on structure, such as an informal group of experts, as there were still issues that required in-depth discussions. However, one delegation noted that the terms of reference for such an informal group would have to be worked out first. A second delegation supported the idea of an internal focal point network, which could address issues related to the micro-level. Another delegation suggested that the Conflict Prevention Centre might assume a coordinating function in considering how to bridge the micro- and macro-levels. It was also expressed that while it might still be too early to consider concrete proposals to be carried forward to the Ministerial Council Meeting in Vilnius, a paper could be prepared as the basis for a possible draft decision. Thought could also be given as to some operational level deliverables that could be actioned prior to that Meeting.

In closing, the Chairmanship noted that it was pleased with the focused contributions by participants, and the many positive comments on its background note of 14 April 2011, which it felt provided a constructive basis for discussions. The Chairmanship perceived that the expert meeting had been an important first step toward facilitating further actions on strengthening the early warning and analytical capacities of the OSCE.

The following elements are perceived to be of primary importance: (1) improve the exchange of information between the Secretariat and other executive structures, a first step that could be undertaken without additional resources, including through developing an appropriate early warning methodology; (2) increase the practical and political co-operation of OSCE executive structures with other international actors, including NGOs and academic institutions; (3) consider that the Conflict Prevention Centre assume a focal point role in early warning analysis, with a view to providing appropriate resources in due time, as its capacity was currently limited; and (4) strengthen the explicit role of the Secretary General, supported by the Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre, to provide early warning to participating States.

The Chairmanship looks forward to a follow-up process that is transparent, inclusive, and flexible. For this purpose, the Chairmanship appointed Ambassador Marcel Peško, Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the OSCE, as a co-ordinator on Enhancing the Early Warning and Analytical Capacity of the OSCE, and announced its intention to establish an informal

working group as a platform for conducting further work and informal consultations on issues relating to conflict cycle.