



***Ambassadorial Workshop within the Framework of the Conflict Cycle
– V to V Dialogue:***

‘Early Response to Crises and Emerging Conflicts’

Chair’s Perception

The 4th event within the framework of the Conflict Cycle – V to V Dialogue, on 20 September 2011 in Vienna, focused on ‘Early Response to Crises and Emerging Conflicts.’ The final version of the agenda was distributed by the Chairmanship under CIO.GAL/153/11/Rev.1 on 12 September 2011. A *Discussion Paper on Reinforcing the OSCE Capacity as Regards Early Response to Crisis and Emerging Conflicts* was distributed by the Chairmanship on 12 September 2011 under CIO.GAL/171/11.

In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Renatas Norkus, Chairperson of the Permanent Council (PC), informed delegations that based on previous sessions of the V to V Dialogues the Chairmanship had a clear idea of the main operative elements that should be put forward in a draft Vilnius Ministerial Council Decision. In that context, he stated that the OSCE’s existing principles and mandates were fundamentally sound and did not require modification. Also, there was no need for new principles and mechanisms but rather to streamline and optimize existing mechanisms and procedures. On financial resources, the Chairmanship’s guiding principle was to seek to do better with existing resources by streamlining and re-allocating them as necessary. At the same time, he noted that participating States should be prepared to be flexible should additional resources be needed. With regard to early response, he said that in the past, positive and negative examples of OSCE involvement could be identified.

In his introductory comments, Ambassador François Alabrune stressed the central place of the conflict cycle in the work of the OSCE, and that practical outcomes and concrete deliverables would need to be produced for the Vilnius Ministerial Council. The deliberations within the Corfu process, the preparatory work for the Astana Summit and the V-toV Dialogues offered a rich base to draw from. Early Response could not be dissociated from other phases of the conflict cycle. An integrated, coherent and cross-dimensional approach was needed between the different aspects of the conflict cycle. On the basis of political will from participating States, the OSCE would have to reconsider the use of its existing mechanisms in order to respond in a timely manner.

Opening perspectives were then provided by Ambassador Adam Kobieracki, Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC); Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, Director of the OSCE Office

for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and Ambassador Knut Vollebaek, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM).

Ambassador Kobieracki suggested that, in order to establish an OSCE Crisis Response concept based on existing mechanisms, it would be necessary to identify what was needed in order to respond to conflict situations in a timely, efficient and systematic manner. He suggested that there are three processes of relevance to the development of a 'culture' of early crisis response: decision making, implementation and a review process. In terms of decision making, he highlighted the difficulty of adopting a fast-track approach, with a sense of urgency and purpose, while simultaneously having to reach consensus between participating States. Moreover, it was suggested to establish focal points to enable swift co-ordination across the Secretariat, institutions, field operations and other relevant actors. For the implementation, sufficient financial resources had to be available and a zero-budget approach could not apply in crises. Furthermore, field operations should strengthen fact-finding and co-ordination with other actors on the ground. The review process should, *inter alia*, reflect on avoiding a relapse into new confrontation or armed violence.

Ambassador Lenarčič focused on the inter-connection between the conflict cycle and human rights issues, which were so often the causes and consequences of conflicts. He opined that OSCE security issues had been followed with insufficient attention paid to human rights and that there was also a tendency to focus on short-term measures while ignoring the long-term context. Drawing from the example of the Kyrgyz Republic in 2010, he regretted that no ODIHR role was foreseen according to the decisions taken at that time. As human rights monitoring could contribute to finding roots of conflicts as well as to confidence building, he suggested to integrate the human rights aspect in all phases of the conflict cycle. The commissioning of impartial reports should be established as an early response tool and provide the basis for discussions and response. The reluctance of participating States to be subjected to early response and the resulting lack of co-operation were identified as substantial problems that – in the context of the consensus rule – would have to be resolved in order for the OSCE not to become a 'helpless bystander'. Ambassador Lenarčič also suggested that a task force helping OSCE structures to "think and act jointly" be established with coordination and exchange of information among focal points from, mainly, CPC, ODIHR, RFoM, HCNM, SPMU and ATU.

Ambassador Vollebaek expressed the need to come forward with concrete deliverables. Recent cases of OSCE crisis management in Georgia and the Kyrgyz Republic were illustrated as failures, not because of poor information but rather the lack of political will to take early action. Due to the difficulties in reaching consensus, ways would have to be found to address some issues without consensus. On the implementation and decision making processes in the PC, he suggested the introduction of a committee structure, including some participating States on the basis of a geographically balanced rotation principle. In order to endorse early and quick response, a high-level task force, co-ordinated by the Chairmanship, should be sent to respective countries and subsequent assessments should provide the basis for PC decisions. Moreover, the analytical capacities as well as the consultative mechanisms between OSCE institutions and field operations needed improving.

Delegations shared the view that the Chairmanship's discussion paper, as well as the opening speeches, provided a good basis for discussion. There was general agreement that outcomes of the V to V Dialogues and previous discussions within the Corfu Process should lead to concrete ideas and deliverables to be put forward at the Vilnius Ministerial Council. There was a general perception that the OSCE should improve its approach to 'early response' and

strengthen its role in preventing and resolving conflicts.

There was a common view that the OSCE would not require new mechanisms, instruments or procedures. Instead, existing tools should be reviewed and fine-tuned in terms of how they are used and implemented. In that respect, one delegation considered the use of consultative *ad hoc* mechanisms as laid out in the provisions of the 2003 Maastricht Strategy. Delegations agreed that political will was central to all decisions made, and lack thereof could prevent further actions from being taken within the framework of the conflict cycle. Within the context of early response, delegations highlighted that the consensus rule should be preserved. One delegation stated that consensus should not be misused while another delegation warned that consensus should not block progress. Thus, a balance needs to be found between swift and timely reaction to conflict situations without undermining or prejudicing consensus.

A number of participants referred to all phases of the conflict cycle with a particular focus on the need to close the gap between early warning and early action, which should be the subject of a discussion at the Ministerial Council. Here, a delegation stressed that early action would not always have to be initiated by a PC decision and that the Chairmanship could make more proactive use of its existing mandate. At the same time, early action would have to be backed by all participating States and any kind of engagement would have to be consensual. Drawing from the past examples of the conflicts in Georgia and the Kyrgyz Republic, one delegation said that the OSCE had not responded quickly enough and, in that respect, it opined that the Organization's reaction had been a failure. In Georgia, the same delegation argued that warning signs were ignored while in Kyrgyzstan – despite a request from its Government – swift action could not be taken due to a lack of consensus between participating States.

Many participants noted that an integrated, coherent and multi-/cross-dimensional approach would be needed when comprehensively and sustainably preventing and resolving conflicts. In particular, more attention should be devoted to human rights when addressing real or potential conflict scenarios. Some delegations stressed that conflicts would have to be approached differently and a one-size-fits-all model would not work. Furthermore, some delegations stressed that protracted conflicts were a central issue within the OSCE area and warned against the freezing of respective negotiation processes. One delegation stated that early response would not imply the resolution of protracted conflicts.

Delegations agreed that the PC and participating States should retain their important role in conflict prevention and resolution. On many occasions, it was suggested to convene extraordinary meetings of the PC during crises in order to accelerate the related decision making process. In addition, some participants suggested increasing the involvement of all ambassadors, including during informal meetings, in order to conduct inclusive consultation for consensus building.

Several participants suggested that more comprehensive information on conflict situations should be provided to the PC and participating States. That could be done through the inclusion of other OSCE executive structures such as the Secretariat (CPC), ODIHR and HCNM, in order to provide information on potential threats and to bring them to the attention of the PC and participating States. More use of the politico-military expertise of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) by holding joint meetings was also suggested. Based on respective reports and specific proposals from institutions, decisions on early response could be reached. Moreover, it was proposed to work more closely with field operations, for instance by inviting their representatives to the PC to provide an assessment of the situation

in the respective country and make proposals accordingly. With reference to Decision III of the 1992 Helsinki Final Act, it was also suggested that the PC could seek independent advice from outside the OSCE.

With regard to internal OSCE structures, there was broad agreement that the role of the Secretary General and the Chairmanship should be enhanced, including by encouraging them to exercise more leadership, as suggested by some delegations. It was argued that a more prominent role of the Secretary General in crises would contribute to the general perception that the OSCE has a genuine interest in resolving conflict situations. Some participants also suggested that, in co-operation with the CPC, impartial reports on potential threats could be commissioned and forwarded to the PC. One delegation suggested that the Secretary General be provided with a roster of experts who could be deployed accordingly. Some delegations stated that, at the same time, the Chairmanship should provide more political guidance. Here, one delegation positively highlighted the involvement of the Chairmanship in Albania.

Delegations shared the view that co-operation and co-ordination between and within OSCE institutions and executive structures should be improved. With regard to information gathering and analysis, several delegations saw the CPC as a key player whose role should be strengthened. One delegation suggested that the CPC should conduct a systematic collection of best practices and lessons learned. Participants also proposed to increase co-operation between the FSC and the Secretariat in order to strengthen analytical capacities. One delegation stressed the need to analyze the way the CPC and the FSC have dealt with crises in the past. Some delegations suggested the establishment of a mediation support capacity in the Secretariat. It was further suggested by delegations that co-operation with field operations should be enhanced in order to gain information on situations in relevant countries. In cases where the OSCE has no presence on the ground, the early deployment of experts and the development of task forces were suggested by some delegations.

Delegations expressed general agreement that co-operation between the OSCE and other international organizations should be improved. This should follow a comprehensive approach aimed at defining areas of responsibility and thus avoiding duplication of efforts. A number of delegations referred to the 1999 Platform for Co-operative Security and suggested to make greater use of it in political and operational matters. Several delegations endorsed an enhanced partnership with other key organizations in the field, namely the EU, NATO, the UN and - where geographically relevant – the CSTO.

With respect to resources, delegations recognized that the provision of financial and human resources was significantly linked to political will. Delegations were also in favour of a possible reallocation of financial resources in order to support early response capacities. A number of delegations advocated the installation of a special conflict prevention and crisis management fund providing the necessary financial means when required. Conflicting views existed on how such a budget would be funded. Many delegations stressed that a flexible approach would have to be taken and additional contributions to a ‘crisis fund’ would have to be considered. One delegation proposed to establish fast-track funding for a contingency and a response fund which should be financed through voluntary contributions. Another delegation argued that a contingency fund already existed and therefore no new competing instruments should be created. Several delegations took a critical stance towards additional financial resources and advocated to solely readjust existing financial means.

In his closing, Ambassador Norkus outlined next steps. He proposed that the Chairmanship prepare a first draft of a Ministerial Council decision on enhancing OSCE capacities to

address the conflict cycle. The Chairmanship envisages one integrated decision covering the main aspects of the conflict cycle, and in particular referring to early warning, early action, mediation support and dialogue facilitation and post-conflict rehabilitation. He hoped that the first draft would be circulated in the first half of October.