



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Challenge of Security in Wider Europe

OSCE Secretary General
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Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for this opportunity. The Institute of International and European Affairs has always worked at the cutting edge of Irish and European debates on security and politics. Recent events underline the importance of such debates.

The conflict in Georgia, the energy crisis that struck last January and February, the economic downturn that affects all corners of the continent – these are all reminders that hard work remains ahead for the 56 participating States of the OSCE.

Ireland plays a key role in this Organization. This country has unique experience to share on European security as well as on overcoming protracted conflict. Fundamental freedoms and human rights have real meaning in this land. Ireland is part of the OSCE backbone. I am very grateful for this.

The experience of thirty five years of the OSCE process underlines important lessons that can be shared. My message to you today is that the OSCE is a unique attempt at international governance. This model has met much success over time, but it also requires constant attention and support.

The OSCE model of international governance has rested on several pillars.

First, the key objective of the Organization has been to provide security across a vast geographic expanse. For a long time, the focus carried here on 'hard' security issues, such as arms control and confidence-building. This focus combined with the ambition also for the CSCE/OSCE to represent the entire Euro-Atlantic space and to provide a forum for pan-European security.

The combination of a 'hard' security focus with a pan-European scope was embodied in the role that the participating States attributed to the OSCE in conflict prevention and crisis management. At least in the early 1990s, this included also the possibility of OSCE peacekeeping operations.

The focus on 'hard' security has always been complemented by a multidimensional approach. This approach was written into the genetic code of the Helsinki Final Act, and it came to life during the 'springtime of Europe' with the end of the Cold War.

Other regional and international organisations have adopted also a comprehensive angle that approaches issues mainly on a sectoral basis. The OSCE method has been unique in integrating the human, the economic and environmental and the politico-military dimensions.

The OSCE model relies on a permanent process of consultation. The participating States meet on a weekly basis in the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation, and regularly throughout the year. Ministerial Council meetings are annual events. The permanent process of dialogue allows for burning issues of the day to be raised and addressed quickly and often efficiently.

The spirit of dialogue is underpinned by the principles of equality and consensus. All participating States have equal power in the OSCE. All decisions are taken on the basis of consensus. This makes running the Organisation a challenge, but it also ensures strong ownership by all of the participating States.

Another feature of OSCE governance concerns the relationship to civil society.

The participating States have agreed that domestic developments in each of them are a concern to all. On this basis, the OSCE has developed close ties across civil society, from NGOs to business groups and the academic world. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly plays a vital role also in developing a parliamentary dimension.

The participating States have created unique institutions in the shape of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and the Representative on Freedom of the Media. These have been designed to support civil society and the rule of law throughout the OSCE area. The dense schedule of meetings organised throughout the year with Governments and civil society has created a framework for the constant exchange of ideas and policies -- for instance, in the fight against human trafficking, in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination.

The lightness of the OSCE is another unique feature.

The OSCE does not have a Charter or legal personality. Its bureaucracy and budget are small. Staff seconded by the participating States, as well as voluntary funding, underpin the work of the Organization. The OSCE field operations are deployed on the basis of a process of constant dialogue with the host countries.

The OSCE adds up to more than the sum of these parts. But to fulfil the ambitions that remain at its heart, the OSCE depends on the engagement of each of the participating States, and their political good will.

How has this system of international governance evolved?

In a few words, developments followed a different trajectory than was initially expected.

The OSCE has acted as the repository of a rich network of arms control and confidence and security building measures. However, the Organization has developed a limited role in crisis management. In the Western Balkans, the United Nations took the lead, with the Organisation undertaking an important, complementary role in supporting reconstruction, reconciliation and long term stabilisation. The lion's share of the OSCE budget remains dedicated to activities in South Eastern Europe.

The OSCE did take the lead in addressing the conflicts in the former Soviet Union. In this respect, I would simply note here that the possibility of a breakthrough in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will call for a greater OSCE role on the ground.

After the end of the Cold War, the OSCE developed as only *one* of a set of evolving pan-European security structures.

From 1993 onwards, NATO set on a path of enlargement, which culminated in the first wave of 1999. At each step along the way, NATO sought to deepen engagement with non-NATO members, including non-candidates. NATO-Russia relations had pride of place in this process. By creating the Permanent Joint Council and the NATO-Russia Council, as well as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, NATO developed *de facto* a pan-European role.

The evolution of EU policy towards Russia and the Eastern neighbours is also important. The EU agreed to develop with Russia four common spaces, and launched the Eastern Partnership in 2009. These policies have provided the EU also with a pan-European scope, as well as structures for cross-European dialogues.

So, other pan-European formats have emerged in the OSCE area – in ways that belied earlier hopes and expectations, particularly for the Russian Federation.

At the same time, the OSCE developed an effective approach to supporting States and societies in the Human Dimension.

In key areas, the OSCE has become an international stand-setter – most notably, in support to electoral processes. OSCE action in the Human Dimension is based on a constant process of interaction with the participating States – especially in countries where field operations are deployed. With time, the OSCE has developed close working relationships with civil society, embodied most saliently in the annual two-week Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw.

OSCE action is not limited to countries East of Vienna. For instance, the struggle against human trafficking has taken in all of the participating States. OSCE activities to promote tolerance and non-discrimination have a similar scope.

The OSCE role in the Economic and Environmental Dimension has been more limited. The Organisation has worked best as a catalyst for networks of international cooperation in this area, bringing together the right people and agencies to develop valuable high-level political attention to two to three questions a year.

The chairmanship of the OSCE has turned out to be a remarkable tool for small and medium size countries. The exercise is time-consuming and expensive, but it has brought real value to a number of countries – both in broadening their impact internationally and in expanding the horizon of the Organisation.

The voluntary nature of the chairmanship brings every year fresh impetus to the work of the OSCE. The chairmanship of Kazakhstan in 2010 will mark another important step for this country and the Organisation itself.

For all this, the OSCE has faced serious challenges since 2005.

There are signs that the good will and consensus that underpinned the work of the OSCE after 1990 has eroded. Some participating States have challenged the commitments they had taken earlier in the Human Dimension. Implementation is patchy in key policy areas.

For its part, the Russian leadership has insisted on the reform of the Organization – to redress perceived geographic and functional imbalances. The suspension by Russia in 2007 of its implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe has thrown doubts over the Euro-Atlantic arms control regime.

The escalation of tensions in the South Caucasus saw the outbreak of conflict in Georgia in August 2008. The OSCE reacted rapidly, through the engagement of the Finnish Foreign Minister and the deployment of additional military monitors to the conflict zone. However, instability has remained high, and debates in Vienna have been acrimonious.

The lack of consensus between the participating States led to the withdrawal of the OSCE Mission to Georgia. The OSCE co-chairs the Geneva Discussions on Georgia with the EU and the UN, but its ability to act on the ground has been constrained severely.

Such trying circumstances raise difficult questions. Where does the OSCE go next? Is the OSCE method still valid? If so, how can it be revitalised?

Since 1975, the CSCE has been driven by the vision of building a 'Europe that is whole and free and at peace with itself.' This task remains unfinished business. Wider Europe is still caught up with difficult processes of transformation and modernisation. The context of economic crisis will not make these developments any easier.

The OSCE remains vital. Wider Europe needs the Organisation as an innovative actor and as a forum for permanent debate. The OSCE method of international governance, founded on equality and consensus, has a vital role to play in tackling complex threats and deep-rooted challenges.

Over the last 35 years, the OSCE has worked as a unique laboratory of security governance for Europe -- where shared values are embodied in detailed commitments, where States work with each other, with NGOs and human rights groups, to implement these, where the concept of comprehensive security is pushed forward on a daily basis, one step at a time.

The OSCE is the only venue like this that joins the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian spaces. This is a real resource for European security, one that should be consolidated. On many issues, the OSCE is *the* forum for engaging with key States on issues of democracy and security, and for grappling with the complexity of a wider Europe that stretches beyond EU borders.

The recent call for a renewed European security dialogue has put the OSCE on the front line.

In June 2008, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev proposed the idea of launching a new security dialogue. Since then, most OSCE participating States have agreed that a renewed, Europe-Atlantic dialogue can be useful – on the basis of existing institutions and within a framework of comprehensive security. In this respect, the OSCE is seen by many States as a natural anchor.

The dialogue has started. Launched in Helsinki last December, the Greek OSCE Chairmanship has taken the process forward -- most recently, in the informal ministerial meeting in Corfu on 27-28 June. A “Corfu Process” has been launched. After Corfu, the next stop will be in Athens, during December OSCE Ministerial Council.

There is no dearth of tasks to be addressed.

We will have to find new will to strengthen the arms control regime of wider Europe, and especially to restore the CFE regime. The spectrum of problems and opportunities arising in the Caucasus will have to be managed carefully. We will have to continue steering through delicate transitions still underway and tough elections to come. Embedding stability in the Western Balkans is not over. Emerging security issues, such as energy security and cyber threats, will have to be addressed. We will have to monitor the impact of insecurity spilling into the OSCE area from outside.

Tackling these problems requires a renewed engagement from all participating States. The OSCE needs impetus and ideas to move forward. The importance of Ireland and other champions of the OSCE lies here.

The OSCE matters all the more today. The Organisation is the only venue like this that joins the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian spaces. This is a real resource for European security, one that should be consolidated. On many issues, the OSCE is *the* forum for engaging with key States on issues of democracy and security, and

for grappling with the complexity of a wider Europe that stretches beyond EU borders.

Thank you.