

Delegation of the Russian Federation

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**OSCE structures and their activities (OSA)  
Session 2: Enhancing the role and further strengthening capabilities of the  
OSCE executive structures**

**Part 2: Lessons learned from field activities**

Distinguished colleagues,

Increasing the effectiveness of the work of our Organization depends in many ways on improving the activities of the OSCE field presences. Russia's position in this regard is reflected in a number of food-for-thought papers co-authored with other countries and distributed during the Corfu discussions.

We have ambivalent feelings in general about the work of the missions and the assistance they provide to the host countries. Russia is highly critical of the way in which this work is structured in practice, particularly with regard to its compliance with the tasks formulated in the field mission mandates. There are also questions about the quality of the co-ordination by the missions with the authorities in the host countries.

We firmly believe that the work of the missions should be carried out in accordance with the general principles set out in their mandates adopted by decision of the OSCE's collective bodies. This calls for an impartial approach, non-interference in the internal affairs of the country, observance of the country's laws, performance in strict compliance with the mandates and in close co-ordination with the authorities in the host country on the basis of their needs and requests, including the implementation of extrabudgetary projects, and an objective presentation of activities undertaken in performance of the mandate and the implementation of projects and also of any events, which should reflect the relevant position of the official authorities.

An increasing number of countries that host field missions have recently been raising the question of changing the mandates or closing the missions altogether. This is quite natural: the main task of the missions should be to provide assistance to new OSCE participating States in meeting their commitments. It is therefore logical that as national statehood becomes consolidated and the tasks are completed, the range of activities of the

mission should become narrower. This is how the principle of OSCE field operations was countenanced in the Charter for European Security (paragraph 41), which established precise criteria defining their effectiveness. I would remind you that the quality and success of the work of the missions are defined in terms of their ability to help States to establish their own national potential and gradually transfer authority to them. Missions cannot and should not be for ever, remaining as indications of some kind of “inferiority” on the part of the host countries.

It is surprising to note that as soon as an OSCE participating State joins NATO or the European Union the OSCE field operation in it is gradually wound down. Does this mean that the very fact of participating in these organizations implies full compliance by these States with their mandates or is it just some notion of political expediency? How long will field missions remain in those countries that do not aspire to join these organizations? All this once again demonstrates the need for the OSCE to define criteria for assessing the effectiveness of missions and to devise an exit strategy or mechanism for deciding when they should be closed down.

The procedure for appointing the heads of OSCE field presences, which gives rise to massive criticism by the host countries, needs to be adjusted. It is only right that the host countries should play a key role in the selection and appointment of heads of missions and that mandatory consultations be held early on by the Chairmanship and the host country. The scandals surrounding the appointment in recent years of the heads of missions in Minsk, Bishkek and Kosovo, who were effectively thrust upon the host countries in disregard of their opinions, confirm the urgency of this problem.

This problem can be solved by changing the procedure for appointing heads of missions and making the appropriate amendments to the OSCE Staff Regulations and Staff Rules. In this connection, mention might be made of the initiative proposed by a number of countries during the Corfu Process for a mechanism of this type. We are counting on support for this proposal at the forthcoming summit meeting in Astana.

I should like to say a few words about the work of specific missions.

Understandably, particular attention should be paid to the field presences in Central Asia. Among the important tasks facing them are combating terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, illegal migration, trafficking in human beings and also ensuring freedom of movement. It is our conviction that all of the project activities by OSCE missions in this region should be carried out in a transparent and balanced manner in close co-operation with the relevant international and regional organizations and, naturally, in accordance with the demands and interests of the host countries.

The crisis in Kyrgyzstan confirmed the need to refine the preventive diplomacy skills of the field missions. In spite of its intensified monitoring of the domestic political situation, the OSCE Centre in Bishkek proved unable to foresee the events in April and the explosion of violence in the south of country in June. It failed to correctly gauge the real attitude of the people to international involvement in domestic politics, particularly the deployment in Kyrgyzstan of the OSCE Police Advisory Group. The authority of our Organization has suffered as a result.

One of the main problems in the Western Balkan region is the return of refugees and internally displaced persons and the protection of their rights. This task is a feature of the mandate of practically all the OSCE field operations in the Balkans. In our opinion, the existing potential is manifestly inadequate, and as a result there is still a danger that a conflict could flare up again.

The best results can be achieved through close co-operation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, taking advantage of its wealth of expertise, statistical data and proven mechanisms for handling the existing problems. We urge that a unified approach be adopted using instruments that have already demonstrated their effectiveness in the Balkans. Multilateral diplomacy is also a very important resource: the conference on refugees held in Belgrade in March and the understandings reached there offer a good starting point for future action.

One further comment. We are noting with increasing frequency that some OSCE field missions in the Balkans are gearing their activities towards the European integration of the host country. We have nothing against these aspirations and the choice made by sovereign Balkan States, many of which are our partners, but we nevertheless think that the use of OSCE resources for these purposes goes beyond the mandates agreed by the participating States.

In conclusion I should like to emphasize once again that for Russia improving the quality of the work of the field operations remains a priority in reforming the OSCE. We trust that objective discussion of this topic will continue as part of the common efforts to improve the Organization's effectiveness.

Thank you for your attention.