

Chairmanship Chairmanship Chair



AP/Bas Czerwinski

Chairman-in-Office | Permanent Council | Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office
Chairpersons of the Contact Group with Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation

Report of the Chairman-in-Office

“The OSCE has come a long way in the past decades. Looking at the distance covered and casting a glance into the foreseeable future, I think we can state with conviction that the OSCE remains relevant and important for all of us.

Many challenges will confront us in the year ahead. However, united by our common values, keeping together in the spirit of solidarity and drawing strength from our diversity, we will not spare efforts to make the Organization stronger.”

OSCE 2004 Chairman-in-Office, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy

The OSCE’s agenda in 2004 was largely set by the decisions taken at the Maastricht Ministerial Council in December 2003, particularly the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century and the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension. In light of these decisions, the Bulgarian Chairmanship decided that implementation should be the main theme for the year. A major topic in 2004 was reform of the OSCE. The Chairmanship also put tolerance and non-discrimination high on its agenda, holding key events on combating anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia, and tackling hate speech on the Internet. Intensifying the co-operation between the OSCE and other international organizations engaged in maintaining security and stability in the OSCE area featured prominently in the activities of the Bulgarian Chairmanship. With the Organization’s first mission outside its area – the Election Support Team to Afghanistan – the OSCE broke new ground under the Bulgarian Chairmanship. Mongolia was welcomed as the OSCE’s newest Partner for Co-operation.

Reforming the OSCE

In 2004, the debate on OSCE reform gathered considerable momentum and achieved prominence in the Organization’s agenda. The enlargement of both the EU and NATO has redrawn the political map of Europe, with implications for other organizations such as the OSCE. New threats and challenges to security have affected strategic priorities. Ideas were proposed, suggesting that ten years since the transformation of the CSCE to the OSCE, the Organization should be re-assessed, adapted and strengthened. Some participating States were particularly outspoken about the need to transform the OSCE. On 3 July 2004, Presidents of nine members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) issued a statement on the need to reform the OSCE, which was followed on 15 September by an appeal by eight CIS Foreign Ministers meeting in Astana.

The Chairman-in-Office was personally involved in the reform debate, as manifested in his address to the 13th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Edinburgh on 5 July. There, and on subsequent occasions, he emphasized the need for:

- making the OSCE less bureaucratic;
- better matching resources with priorities;
- shifting resources from south-eastern Europe to the Caucasus and Central Asia;
- changing the venue of human dimension and Economic Forum meetings to better reflect the geographic diversity of the OSCE area;
- updating the OSCE rules of procedure;
- improving the effectiveness of field activities; and
- strengthening the role of the Secretary General.

These and other ideas were discussed in the Working Group on Reform, chaired by the Ambassador of Romania, and the Working Group on Improving the Functioning and Effectiveness of OSCE Field Operations, chaired by the Ambassador of Canada and, since September, by the Ambassador of Austria.

For the first time since 1973, an exercise on updating the rules of procedure was carried out, and significant progress was made. At the Sofia Ministerial Council, a decision was taken clarifying the role of the Secretary General.

In line with the prevailing view that the OSCE's effectiveness should be increased, the Ministers decided in Sofia to establish a Panel of Eminent Persons on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE. This would be followed by specially convened high-level OSCE consultations in 2005 aimed at drawing up a strategic vision for the OSCE in the 21st century.

The reform process is ongoing and will be a topic for debate in 2005 when the OSCE celebrates a number of anniversaries and looks ahead to the future.

The fight against terrorism

Terrorism remains one of the gravest threats to the individual and common security of OSCE participating States. The horrendous attacks in Beslan and Madrid in 2004 further demonstrated that terrorism is a clear and present danger in the OSCE area. Reinforcing the Organization's role in combating terrorism therefore remained a high priority of the Bulgarian Chairmanship.

The Chairmanship broadened the mandate of the informal Group of Friends on Combating Terrorism, which was established in 2003. This enabled the Group, chaired by the Ambassador of Sweden, not only to review the implementation of previous commitments, but also to turn its attention towards responding to other current and emerging terrorist threats.

The high degree of attention paid to terrorism by participating States was also demonstrated at the second Annual Security Review Conference held in Vienna on 23 and 24 June.

In the framework of its specific mandate, the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) made a significant contribution to enhancing the OSCE's role in curbing the terrorist threat.

The success of the work of the informal Group of Friends and the FSC was evident in the number and range of counter-terrorism decisions that were taken at the Sofia Ministerial Council:

- combating the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes;
- enhancing container security;
- reporting lost/stolen passports to Interpol's database;
- developing principles on export controls of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS);
- developing principles on the control of brokering in small arms and light weapons;
- producing standard elements of end-user certificates and verification procedures for exports of small arms and light weapons;
- implementing the OSCE Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition;
- endorsing Permanent Council decisions on further measures to suppress terrorist financing; and
- demonstrating solidarity with victims of terrorism.

The Sofia Ministerial Statement on Preventing and Combating Terrorism reaffirmed the resolve of participating States to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

"What is called for are practical robust measures to fight terrorism."

Solomon Passy

In addition, a number of practical OSCE conferences and workshops gathered experts from OSCE participating States for an exchange of information, experiences, and best practices in countering urgent terrorist threats such as the MANPADS threat to civil aviation.

In its efforts to guide the OSCE's counter-terrorism work, the Chairmanship focused on the fundamental principle that the fight against terrorism should not be used as a pretext to restrict human rights and civil liberties in any way.

Recognizing the OSCE's growing role in counter-terrorism and its successful interaction with other organizations, the OSCE hosted, in co-operation with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Third Special Meeting of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee (UNCTC) with International, Regional and Sub-Regional Organizations in March.

Border security and management

With the adoption of the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century at the Maastricht Ministerial Council in 2003, participating States agreed on developing an OSCE Border Security and Management Concept. An informal Working Group of Friends on Borders was set up in January under the chairmanship of the Ambassador of Belgium. The Working Group started its work by exchanging information and experience on what had been done so far in the field of border-related issues, both inside and outside the OSCE, and by promoting a focused discussion among participating States. Between June and October, extensive work was done on drafting the concept. Due to the complexity of the issue, some participating States felt that the time was not yet ripe to agree on a concept on borders in the OSCE. In Sofia, the Ministers identified the political goals, principles and considerations to be taken into account in completing the task in 2005.

As a response to the OSCE's commitment to the Ohrid process in terms of civilian aspects of training and advice to border police, assistance to and facilitation of institution-building as well as promotion of regional co-operation, the OSCE's South Eastern Europe Cross-border Co-operation Programme was implemented. The Programme's first phase consisted of six seminars, all based on the results of a needs assessment mission that took place in autumn

2003. The Programme responded to the most urgent needs and demands in this field and addressed senior and middle management at the regional and sub-regional levels. It aimed at accelerating regional cross-border co-operation among the respective border police forces and at setting the scene for more specific topics under the second phase in 2005. All seminars were well attended by the Programme's countries and their neighbouring States. Participants were unanimous in agreeing that the aims had been successfully met, in particular the 'quick impact' solutions to problems that the Programme had set out to achieve.

In September, the Bulgarian Chairmanship organized a two-day joint OSCE-UNODC Technical Experts Conference on Border Management and Security. The aim was to share international organizations' experience in promoting more effective border management and security as well as to develop a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to delivering international assistance. Almost 200 participants from all 55 OSCE participating States, Partners for Co-operation and international organizations such as NATO, the European Commission, CIS, Europol, Interpol, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Wassenaar Arrangement, and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, attended the conference. The event set the scene for ensuring better and closer co-operation among the international organizations that have border management and security-related mandates.

The Chairmanship, the Secretariat and the OSCE Mission to Moldova developed contingency plans for an OSCE Border and Customs Monitoring Operation (BCMO) at the Moldovan-Ukrainian border. As of the end of 2004, implementation of the BCMO was not yet possible.

Education

“Education is vitally important for empowering individuals and groups and for developing their capacity for the peaceful resolution of conflicts within and among nations.”

Solomon Passy

At the outset, the Bulgarian Chairmanship included education, in the widest sense of the word, among its priorities. Taking into account the global interest towards security in the Central Asian region, a main focus of the Bulgarian Chairmanship was to draw the attention of participating States and other international organizations to education in Central Asia. This was deemed important as high educational standards can help foster stability and security in the area and can give a further impetus to the reform process.

In light of the above, a one-day Ministerial Conference on Education as an Investment into the Future was held in Tashkent on 5 April. Organized by the Bulgarian Chairmanship and hosted by

the Uzbek Government, the Conference brought together Ministers of Education of Central Asian States and of Afghanistan as well as institutions and international organizations. This included international financial institutions, development agencies and research institutes from within and outside the region. The Chairman-in-Office addressed the conference.

The event's main objectives were to offer a platform to the region's States to illustrate their achievements, foster increased co-operation and synergies with all actors, and take stock of ongoing supporting activities by international organizations. The conference issued a number of recommendations, including: (i) internationalizing the education systems; (ii) achieving quality education for all; (iii) providing higher salaries to teachers; (iv) strengthening vocational training; (v) training staff at education ministries; (vi) developing an education financing framework based on medium-term targets and on associated costs of inputs; and (vii) developing ideas for regional co-operation, following the example of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship further encouraged synergies with the OSCE's other education-related work since the topic cuts across different dimensions and facilitated education-related activities in the framework of:

- field operations, in particular the curriculum development in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, and Latin script schools in Moldova as well as the OSCE Mission in Kosovo's youth and education programme;
- the OSCE Conferences on Anti-Semitism in Berlin, and on Tolerance and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination in Brussels;
- the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights' (ODIHR) Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on human rights education and training held in March;
- the 12th Economic Forum, which developed recommendations for education, capacity-building and training programmes;
- the work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities; and
- the activities of the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Furthermore, the Chairmanship tasked the Secretariat's Conflict Prevention Centre to prepare an OSCE-wide survey of all past, present and future OSCE education-related activities. The survey highlighted that the scope of the OSCE's involvement in education covered activities from capacity-building of educational institutions to vocational training as well as awareness-raising activities and advocacy for OSCE values and commitments. The findings reconfirmed a considerable role and investment on the part of the OSCE in education as it relates to conflict prevention.

Sofia Ministerial Council

Foreign Ministers from OSCE participating States met in Sofia on 6 and 7 December for the 12th Ministerial Council of the OSCE. The Ministers adopted 19 decisions on a range of issues, including fighting terrorism, curbing illegal small arms and light weapons, promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, and combating corruption. The Sofia Ministerial Council documents include:

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- Ministerial Statement on Preventing and Combating Terrorism
- Ministerial Declaration on the Sixtieth Anniversary of the End of World War II
- Statement of the Ministerial Council on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict
- Decision No. 1: Extension of the Mandate of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities
- Decision No. 2: Elaboration of an OSCE Border Security and Management Concept
- Decision No. 3: Combating the Use of the Internet for Terrorist Purposes
- Decision No. 4: Reporting Lost/Stolen Passports to Interpol's Automated Search Facility/Stolen Travel Document Database
- Decision No. 5: Further Implementing the OSCE Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition
- Decision No. 6: OSCE Standard Elements of End-User Certificates and Verification Procedures for Small Arms and Light Weapons Exports
- Decision No. 7: OSCE Principles on the Control of Brokering in Small Arms and Light Weapons
- Decision No. 8: OSCE Principles for Export Controls of Man-Portable Air Defence Systems
- Decision No. 9: Enhancing Container Security
- Decision No. 10: Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Economic Forum
- Decision No. 11: Combating Corruption
- Decision No. 12: Tolerance and Non-Discrimination
- Decision No. 13: The Special Needs for Child Victims of Trafficking for Protection and Assistance
- Decision No. 14: 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality
- Decision No. 15: Role of the OSCE Secretary General
- Decision No. 16: Establishment of a Panel of Eminent Persons on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE
- Decision No. 17: OSCE and its Partners for Co-operation
- Decision No. 18: OSCE Chairmanship in the year 2007
- Decision No. 19: Time and Place of the Next Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council

Politico-Military Dimension

Forum for Security and Co-operation

The Bulgarian Chairmanship welcomed the OSCE's efforts in promoting the fight against trafficking of small arms and light weapons. The implementation of the Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons adopted in 2000 was high on the FSC's agenda in 2004. In May, the FSC's determination to reduce the risk of diversion of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) into illicit markets led to the adoption of a decision on OSCE Principles for Export Controls of MANPADS. Furthermore, a decision on OSCE Principles on the Control of Brokering in Small Arms and Light Weapons was adopted just before the Sofia Ministerial Council. The decision aimed at improving the control of arms brokering, thus minimizing the risk of diversion of these weapons into illegal markets and into the hands of terrorists and other criminal groups. The FSC recognized the need for stricter export controls of these weapons to prevent the destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled spread. This resulted in the adoption of two decisions on Verification Procedures for Small Arms and Light Weapons Exports and Standard Elements of End-User Certificates. The Ministerial Council in Sofia endorsed all these decisions.

The Chairmanship also noted the risks and challenges to human security and to the environment posed by the presence of stockpiles of conventional ammunition. The Chairmanship welcomed the principles and procedures agreed to by participating States and the steps already taken to implement the OSCE Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition. The Ministerial Council in Sofia therefore asked the FSC to submit a progress report on the implementation of the Stockpiles Document to the next Ministerial Council in 2005.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship strongly believes that the implementation of the Documents on Small Arms and Light Weapons and on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition will enhance security in the OSCE area. The OSCE has already received several requests for assistance from participating States. Three States indicated their willingness to receive operational assistance for the destruction of these weapons, and five States requested assistance for the destruction of surplus ammunition. Considerable financial means will be required for these operations. The Chairmanship encouraged participating States to continue to address this issue.

Annual Security Review Conference

The Chairmanship welcomed the results of the second Annual Security Review Conference, which was convened with the support of the Secretariat in Vienna on 23 and 24 June. The event reviewed activities undertaken the previous year in the field of security. Its goals were to improve the exchange of information on major security issues and to set strategies and define priorities for the coming year. The conference consisted of four sessions. Participants from all 55 participating States including additional representatives from capitals took part in the discussions, together with all ten Partners for Co-operation and a number of key international partners of the OSCE. Special focus was placed on terrorism-related initiatives, border-related work, traditional politico-military activities, and

the way forward, touching specifically on the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century and the need to make the Strategy operational.

Economic and Environmental Dimension

The 2004 agenda in the economic and environmental dimension was largely set by the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension. With guidance from the Economic and Environmental Sub-Committee, the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) engaged in a number of activities to implement the Document in the fields of economic co-operation, good governance, small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development, anti-trafficking, human capacity-building, and sustainable development.

Special emphasis was placed on improving the OSCE's performance in the areas of early warning and implementation of existing commitments. To this end, a Memorandum of Understanding of Co-operation was signed at the Sofia Ministerial Council between the OSCE and the UN Economic Commission for Europe.

The 12th Economic Forum took place in Prague on 31 May under the theme of 'New Challenges for Building up Institutional and Human Capacity for Economic Development and Co-operation'. The Chairman-in-Office suggested that in future, Economic Forum meetings should be organized differently and held in other locations within the OSCE area. At the Sofia Ministerial Council, a decision was taken on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Economic Forum. Tajikistan and Turkmenistan sent invitations to host future meetings of the Economic Forum.

The OCEEA assessed the recommendations made at the 12th OSCE Economic Forum and suggested concrete follow-up in the fields of SME development, investment, human capacity-building, economic integration and the fight against corruption. The Sofia Ministerial Council adopted a decision on combating corruption.

Human Dimension

The Chairmanship's activities in the human dimension pursued several tracks. A number of activities were channelled through the regular OSCE human dimension meetings: the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, the Human Dimension Seminar and the three Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings (SHDMs). Other activities stemmed from decisions taken at the 2003 Maastricht Ministerial Council, such as the Conferences on Anti-Semitism and on Tolerance and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, the Meeting on the Relationship between Racist, Xenophobic and Anti-Semitic Propaganda on the Internet and Hate Crimes, and the work on the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality.

The three SHDMs in Vienna, organized in co-operation with the ODIHR, were devoted separately to human rights education and

training, electoral standards and commitments, and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The first of these meetings took place on 25 and 26 March. The theme 'Human Rights Education and Training' was chosen to give all interested parties, including international organizations and NGOs, the opportunity to consolidate ongoing efforts to promote human rights education and training in the OSCE region. Participants shared best practices and discussed topics such as formal human rights education, its inclusion in school curricula and training of public officials, and informal human rights education. Useful recommendations on how to improve the quality of human rights education and training were examined.

The second meeting on 15 and 16 July was devoted to Electoral Standards and Commitments. It provided a discussion forum on the implementation of existing OSCE commitments for democratic elections and follow-up to ODIHR recommendations. Several OSCE delegations emphasized that the participating States should consider the possibility of supplementary commitments in addition to existing ones. The meeting underlined the necessity to address emerging challenges, such as electronic voting, low turnout trends, recall elections and referenda.

The third SHDM on 4 and 5 November examined the situation of IDPs. The main objective was to discuss practical solutions that OSCE Institutions and participating States can apply to alleviate the plight of IDPs in the OSCE area. The meeting featured general discussions of state responsibility towards IDPs, their fundamental rights and freedoms and more focused debates on durable solutions, including return, resettlement, reintegration and property restitution. Participants called on participating States to develop detailed laws and policies to protect IDPs.

As stipulated by the OSCE Action Plan for Gender Issues, the Organization's participating States developed an Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality that sets out the OSCE's priorities in promoting gender equality in the Organization and all participating States and in monitoring the Plan's implementation. The Action Plan was endorsed by the Sofia Ministerial Council. The annual Human Dimension Seminar held in Warsaw from 12 to 14 May was devoted to Democratic Institutions and Democratic Governance. The meeting provided a forum to revive the debate on the current state and future of democratic institutions and democratic governance. The meeting underscored the urgency of fostering a more developed understanding of how democratic processes work. Moreover, the need to develop a culture of respect and to take active part in developing effective and inclusive mechanisms of interaction between citizens and governmental authorities was underlined.

As tasked by Ministerial Council Decision No. 4 on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination adopted in Maastricht, the Bulgarian Chairmanship continued the important work begun in 2003. In co-operation with Germany and Belgium, it organized two major conferences on these issues. The first one, which took place in Berlin on 28 and 29 April, focused on anti-Semitism. It was

followed on 13 and 14 September by the Conference on Tolerance and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination in Brussels. Both events confirmed the OSCE States' determination to work together in combating racism, xenophobia, discrimination and anti-Semitism. In addition, two Permanent Council decisions tasked the ODIHR with further action in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. The conferences highlighted the key role of the ODIHR as a data collection point and urged participating States, NGOs and others to work in partnership with the Office. The Chairman-in-Office's Berlin Declaration and Brussels Declaration reflect the spirit of the two conferences.

As urged by the Ministerial Council in Maastricht, the Chairmanship, in co-operation with France, organized a special Meeting on the Relationship between Racist, Xenophobic and Anti-Semitic Propaganda on the Internet and Hate Crimes' The meeting, which took place on 16 and 17 June in Paris, reaffirmed the importance of fully respecting the rights to freedom of information and expression, reiterated the commitment to combat hate crimes and stressed the need of promoting tolerance, mutual respect, dialogue and understanding, including through the media and the Internet.

The Human Dimension Implementation Meeting took place in Warsaw from 4 to 15 October. The first week was marked by a comprehensive review of all OSCE commitments in the Human Dimension. Three selected topics were discussed: promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination, freedom of assembly and association and complementarity, and co-operation between international organizations in promoting human rights. On a special day devoted to freedom of assembly and association, participants highlighted the need for the OSCE to maintain its focus on the protection of human rights defenders. Other recommendations included continuing the political dialogue with participating States, training of government officials, introducing changes in administrative practices and deepening co-operation between international organizations in promoting human rights.

On 10 March, following a silence procedure by the Ministerial Council, the Chairman-in-Office appointed Miklós Haraszti of Hungary to the position of OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

In line with Maastricht Ministerial Council Decision No. 2 on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the Chairman-in-Office appointed Helga Konrad of Austria as his Special Representative on Trafficking in Human Beings for a two-year period, beginning in May 2004.

As part of the OSCE's overall fight against discrimination and the Organization's efforts to promote tolerance, the Chairman-in-Office appointed three Personal Representatives on 22 December: Anastasia Crickley of Ireland as Personal Representative on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions; Gert Weisskirchen of Germany as Personal Representative on Combating anti-Semitism; and Ambassador Ömür Orhun of Turkey as Personal Representative on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims.

Combating anti-Semitism, xenophobia and discrimination

The OSCE's activities in the fight against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance gained increased momentum in 2004. Three major international events devoted to these issues were held in the course of the year, which concluded with the appointment by the Chairman-in-Office of three Personal Representatives to promote greater tolerance and combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination in the OSCE region. At the Sofia Ministerial Council meeting in December, the Foreign Ministers adopted a strong decision on tolerance and non-discrimination that further underlined the Organization's continuing focus on the issue.

Moving on to action: Berlin Conference on Anti-Semitism

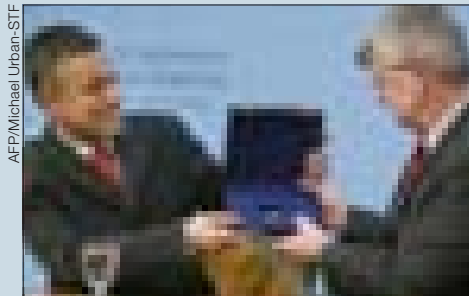
At the invitation of German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, more than 500 delegates from OSCE States and their ten partner countries met in April in Berlin for the OSCE's second Conference on Anti-Semitism. The meeting, which was attended by many ministers, high-level politicians and public figures, received worldwide media attention. German President Johannes Rau, who opened the conference, said that the OSCE had been the first security organization to recognize the relationship between international security and human rights.

Key topics for discussion at the event were the roles of government, civil society, education and media in combating anti-Semitism and in promoting tolerance. The Chairman-in-Office – on behalf of the delegates – concluded the two-day conference with what he called the “Berlin Declaration”, which condemned all manifestations of anti-Semitism and committed the OSCE participating States to take specific, practical counter-measures in this regard, including the submission of information and statistics on anti-Semitic and other hate crimes to the ODIHR. The ODIHR was tasked with reporting on and publicly disseminating this information as well as closely following anti-Semitic incidents in the OSCE area.

The importance of this major international meeting was underlined by many of the key speakers. The OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, said: “I believe our conference in the last two days has made a significant contribution to making our collective response to anti-Semitism more credible.” He also stressed the crucial role of education in the fight against anti-Semitism and hate crimes: “Bias is learned in childhood. Special importance has to be given to the promotion of educational programmes for combating anti-Semitism and of

education about the Holocaust and about respect for all ethnic and religious groups.”

The end of the Berlin Conference was marked by an emotional moment: as a tribute to the European-Jewish dialogue, Minister Passy handed over the yellow star his grandfather had worn as a Jew in Bulgaria during World War II to the German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer.



Presenting the small yellow star to Fischer, Passy said: “My grandfather used to say that the time would come when we and the Germans would be allies again. He used to say: ‘Then we shall return the yellow star to the Germans.’ I am happy that I can now fulfil the legacy of my grandfather and return the yellow star which he wore.”

The Paris meeting: racist propaganda, hate crimes, and the Internet

In June, a meeting in Paris enlarged the ongoing debate on intolerance by including the most modern means of global communication: the Internet. For two days, senior officials from OSCE States and professionals from the Internet industry as well as NGO experts exchanged views on whether the upsurge in hate crimes in OSCE countries could be related to the reportedly steady increase of racist and anti-Semitic content on the Internet.

The event reflected the diverse views of participating States and NGOs on the subject. Several countries called on the OSCE to take steps against such Internet content and hold Internet providers responsible for their sites. Others warned of stifling the diversity of the Internet as a modern information tool and emphasized the role of self-regulation, educational measures and best practices. In following up to the Meeting, the OSCE Permanent Council adopted Decision No. 633 on Promoting Tolerance and Media Freedom on the Internet, which commits the participating States of the OSCE to take concrete actions in combating hate crimes, which can be fuelled by racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic propaganda on the Internet.

“A clear route mapped out”: Brussels Conference on Tolerance and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination

The series of conferences ended in Brussels in September, where some 700 government representatives, among them many ministers, public figures and leaders of civil society, discussed actions that best promote tolerance and bring forward effective measures to combat discrimination and xenophobia in the OSCE region.

In his keynote address, Prince Hassan of Jordan urged participants not just to tolerate but to respect others. He spoke about universal awareness of diversity and the importance of shared values as a means to combat xenophobia and racism.

The Chairman-in-Office, on behalf of the participating States, concluded the conference with what he called the “Brussels Declaration” that, among other issues, condemned without reserve all forms of racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism and other acts of intolerance, including against Muslims as well as all organizations and individuals promoting such hatred or acts, and urged a structural follow-up to ensure implementation of the commitments on tolerance and non-discrimination. The Declaration also committed participating States to promote and facilitate open and transparent interfaith and intercultural dialogue and to consider establishing training programmes for law enforcement and judicial officials on legislation and enforcement of legislation related to hate crimes.

“We now have a clear route mapped out,” Minister Passy said at the conclusion of the conference. “Action is called for and the OSCE is determined to provide a strong lead.”

Three new Personal Representatives

An additional important step was taken in December, when the Chairman-in-Office appointed Anastasia Crickley, Chair of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, Gert Weisskirchen, Professor of Higher Education and Member of the German Parliament, and Ambassador Ömür Orhun, Head of the Turkish Delegation to the OSCE from 2000 to 2004, as his Personal Representatives to further promote action in the area of non-discrimination and tolerance (see also Report of the Chairman-in-Office).

Operational capacity of the OSCE

OSCE Troika

Consisting of the countries representing the current Chairman-in-Office, his predecessor and successor, the OSCE Troika continued to function as an important tool for co-ordinated action and mid-term planning. In 2004, the OSCE Troika met at the level of foreign ministers in January and in July, including also the Secretary General, the Heads of Institutions and the President of the Parliamentary Assembly.



The 2004 Troika of OSCE Foreign Ministers: Bulgarian Chairman-in-Office, Solomon Passy (centre) and his counterparts from the Netherlands, Bernard Bot (right), and Slovenia, Dimitrij Rupel (left)

Co-operation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

The Chairmanship continued to co-operate closely with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, including through the Assembly's special representative in Vienna.

The Chairman-in-Office addressed the Assembly's Winter Session on 19 February in Vienna, where he stressed the need for enhancing the co-operation between the Parliamentary Assembly and other OSCE Institutions and bodies.

He also addressed the Assembly's 13th Annual Session in Edinburgh on 5 July, which focused on the theme 'Co-operation and Partnership: Coping with New Security Threats'. He commended the choice of such a timely topic and underlined the role of the Parliamentary Assembly as an important institution promoting the OSCE's values. He also presented a number of ideas for transforming the Organization in order to further improve its efficiency and maintain its contemporary security priorities. These recommendations and ideas found support among the parliamentarians and were included in a Parliamentary Assembly resolution.

Financial issues

Pursuing the activities in 2003 of the informal Financial Committee Working Group on the OSCE's Scales of Contribution, the Bulgarian Chairmanship undertook steps to reach a timely agreement on the Scales. In this endeavour, the Chairmanship was also guided by the two relevant PC decisions on this issue adopted in 2001 (No. 408) and in 2002 (No. 468). During the negotiation process, systematic efforts were made to reconcile the diverging views through consultations in different formats, to reach an acceptable compromise and move further towards 'capacity to pay' levels. From the outset, it was openly stated that reaching consensus on the Scales of Contribution would only be possible if all participating States applied creativity, realism and clear political will to reach a consensus.

In December, following the issuing of several papers representing the Chair's 'Guesses' on the issue, the Chairmanship introduced a final proposal for the two Scales of Contribution, which followed the basic criteria of PC Decisions No. 408 and No. 468 as well as the methodology developed by the Working Group in 2003. The Chairman's proposal avoided both large increases and decreases of the contributions, achieved through limitations in the fluctuation. Practically only one participating State withheld the consensus on this proposal.

Regional issues

In 2004, a priority for Bulgaria's OSCE Chairmanship was to support the process of democratization in Georgia, to re-invigorate the process of dialogue in Moldova, and to maintain effective co-operation with all States where the OSCE maintains field activities. In the course of the year, the Chairmanship had to respond quickly to developments in Ajara and South Ossetia in Georgia, a flare-up of violence in Kosovo, and mass protests in Ukraine following the presidential election there.

CAUCASUS

Southern Caucasus

One of the Chairmanship's main priorities in the southern Caucasus was to promote the peaceful settlement of the existing conflicts and to prevent the occurrence of new conflicts in the region.

In 2004, **Georgia** underwent significant political changes, making OSCE activities in the country particularly challenging and also demanding increased attention from the Organization's Chairmanship.

Following the pledges of support by participating States at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Maastricht in December 2003, the Georgia Election Assistance Programme (GEAP) was set up by the Mission to Georgia to assist the country in the conduct of extraordinary presidential and parliamentary elections on 4 January and 28 March 2004.

The Chairmanship took an active stand in response to the crisis around Ajara. In particular, during the peak of the crisis in mid-March, the Chairman-in-Office flew to Poti to promote a peaceful settlement of the crisis. He met Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania and had a telephone conference with the Head of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara at that time, Aslan Abashidze. The Chairmanship also supported the increased activities of the OSCE Mission in Ajara, particularly in relation to the development of local free media and human rights protection organizations.

In the summer, violence erupted in the zone of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. The OSCE appealed repeatedly to Tbilisi and Tskhinvali to cease hostile actions and seek a peaceful solution to the conflict. The Chairman-in-Office discussed the situation with President Saakashvili, Prime Minister Zhvania, and South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoity. He also discussed issues related to the settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and US Secretary of State Colin Powell. In support of the existing OSCE efforts to reduce tensions, the Special Envoy of the Chairman-in-Office, former Bulgarian President Zhelyu Zhelev, visited Georgia from 25 to 28 July. He held talks with

representatives of both sides, urging them to exercise maximum restraint and implement commitments entered into within the framework of the settlement process.

Throughout the crisis, the OSCE actively monitored developments on the ground and sought to reduce tensions. On 6 August, the Permanent Council decided to enhance the Mission's staff by two monitoring officers. After a cease-fire agreement was reached on 13 August, a group of 20 Heads and members of OSCE delegations, accompanied by a representative of the Chairman-in-Office, visited Georgia from 5 to 9 September to get first-hand information on the situation in the country, in particular on the developments related to the Georgian-Ossetian conflict.

The OSCE actively sought and welcomed the resumption of the high-level dialogue between the Georgian and South Ossetian leadership. On 5 November, Prime Minister Zhvania and South Ossetian leader Kokoity met and agreed on a number of issues, including the phased demilitarization of the zone of conflict and the necessity to support economic development and ensure freedom of movement of people and goods in the area. Building on these developments, the Chairmanship offered to host a high-level meeting

Observing the November elections in the United States

On 2 November, the citizens of the United States cast their ballots for a new President – an event monitored for the first time by OSCE observers. As is customary for OSCE election observation missions, a team of election experts arrived several weeks before election day in Washington, D.C., to gain an impression of the electoral campaign in the run-up to the polls. Some days before voting day, they were joined by a group of 70 short-term observers, who fanned out to a total of 11 US states: California, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio and Virginia.

to lead the OSCE Short-Term Election Observation Mission. The ten ODHR election experts representing the Long-Term Observation Mission were headed by Professor Rita Süßmuth of Germany.

“The Election Observation Mission enhanced the credibility, not only of the OSCE but also that of the United States as a participating State of the OSCE. It is important for the Organization not to be perceived as applying double standards in the observation and monitoring of elections in the OSCE area.”

Barbara Haering, Head of the Short-Term Election Observation Mission

Electoral reform issues were at the centre of the OSCE's election observation efforts in the US. In 2002, the US Congress approved the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), a law to further reform the electoral system. It stipulates, for the first time, nationwide rules and regulations for election procedures that set national minimum standards for running elections. It also provides federal funds to support the upgrading of voting machines.

The OSCE observers took a close look at the implementation of HAVA, paying special attention to electronic voting machines, whose introduction in the US as well as in other parts of the world had caused much controversy.

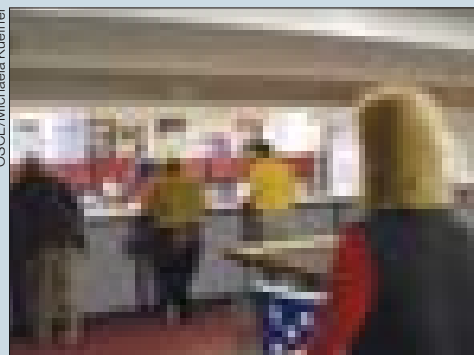
The widespread introduction of ATM-style voting machines caused new concerns because of the lack of a paper trail and the potential for manipulation.

“This was an excellent opportunity to exchange democratic practices and know-how, and to get an insight into the spirit of the US approach to the conduct of elections.”

Rita Süßmuth, Head of the Long-Term Observation Mission

Although some observers found themselves barred from entering polling stations because of different local regulations, election monitoring went, for the most part, smoothly. On 4 November, Ms. Haering and Ms. Süßmuth presented the Mission's preliminary post-election statement.

The report concluded that the elections had been conducted in an environment reflecting a long-standing democratic tradition, comprising institutions governed by the rule of law, free and professional media and an active civil society involved in all aspects of the election process. HAVA was to be viewed as a process rather than as a final legislative step. At the same time, the report called for nationwide voter registration rules and clearer procedures for handling provisional ballots and identification as well as for military and overseas voting.



Voter registration in Arlington county, Virginia

Most of the short-term observers were members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Barbara Haering, Vice-President of the Assembly, was appointed by the Chairman-in-Office

in Sofia devoted to identifying possibilities to resolve the conflict. The Chairmanship also welcomed the parties' acknowledgment of the OSCE's positive role in the settlement process, including its financing of the demolition of military fortifications, its support for setting-up a Secretariat of the Joint Peace-Keeping Force and its active role in the implementation of confidence-building projects and the rehabilitation of basic infrastructure in the zone of conflict.

Regarding the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, the OSCE continued to support the UN's efforts to bring about a comprehensive settlement and is following closely developments in the region. The Chairmanship expressed its hope that negotiations will be resumed as soon as possible once a decision on the future political leadership of Abkhazia is reached. The Chairmanship supported the OSCE's work with the UN Observer Mission in Georgia towards opening a Gali branch of the UN Human Rights Office in Abkhazia.

The OSCE Border Monitoring Operation (BMO) in Georgia played an important confidence-building role, thus contributing to the promotion of security along the Ingush, Chechen and Dagestan segments of the border between Georgia and the Russian Federation. However, at the end of 2004, the BMO's mandate was not extended due to lack of consensus among participating States.

“With the practical, pragmatic approach that is so characteristic of our Organization, we have concentrated our efforts on concrete areas where we can make a real difference.”

Solomon Passy

The OSCE continued to support **Armenia** in the process of electoral and constitutional reforms with special focus on Electoral Code reform and constitutional amendments. In addition, the OSCE continued to promote the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments in all three dimensions in Armenia. Special attention was given to the fight against corruption, freedom of the media, anti-trafficking, preventing and combating terrorism, penitentiary reform, police assistance and economic and environmental activities. The preparation for the implementation of the Police Assistance Programme and the Project on Elimination of Rocket Fuel Component (*Melange*) as a typical OSCE cross-dimensional activity were another focus of the OSCE's activities in the country.

The Chairmanship closely followed developments in relation to opposition rallies held in Yerevan in April. The OSCE expressed its concern over actions against opposition supporters and journalists during these rallies and disturbances that followed. The Organization continued to emphasize the importance of dialogue between the authorities and the opposition, and the participation of all factions in the Parliament's law-making activities.

In **Azerbaijan**, the Organization continued to promote the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments in all dimensions, with a special focus on the rule of law, good governance and freedom of the media, including projects in the areas of police assistance and economic and environmental development.

During his visit to Azerbaijan on 16 March, the Chairman-in-Office raised the question of democratization and respect for human rights in the country and also expressed concern over the fate of those detained and awaiting trial after the October disturbances. He welcomed the decision of President Ilham Aliyev of 17 March to pardon 129 people and release them from prison. The OSCE expressed its concern over the conduct of the trials, including the decision of the Court of Appeals to uphold the prison sentences of the seven senior opposition members on 19 November. In the framework of the ODIHR's Trial Monitoring Programme, the Office in Baku, along with local lawyers, monitored the trials and prepared a report, which was set to be discussed with the Government.

The Chairmanship was closely involved in the promotion of a political settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Close co-operation involving the Chairmanship, the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference, and the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, was further pursued under the Bulgarian Chairmanship. In his contacts with the parties, the Chairman-in-Office assured them of his and the OSCE's commitment to finding a solution to the conflict and his support for the positive momentum gained in 2004 in the course of the meetings between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan under the auspices of the Co-Chairs of the Minsk

Group as well as in the framework of the 'Prague Process'. Through the Prague Process, the Foreign Ministers of both countries methodically explored all the parameters of a future settlement. The Chairmanship considered it encouraging that a statement was agreed on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict at the Ministerial Council in Sofia.

To add impetus to the peace process, the Chairman-in-Office also asked former Bulgarian Prime Minister Philip Dimitrov to visit Armenia and Azerbaijan as his Special Envoy for the conflict. Mr. Dimitrov, who travelled to the region from 20 to 24 September, reaffirmed in Baku and Yerevan the Chairman-in-Office's support for the efforts of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group and his Personal Representative. He also called on the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan to take into account the framework presented to them by the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group in mid-September in Astana, which could serve as basis for a settlement. Mr. Dimitrov was reassured in Baku and Yerevan that the sides were committed to reaching a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The activities of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference were instrumental in reducing tensions along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and the line of contact, particularly during the summer, when a number of violations against the cease-fire agreement took place.

The fight against trafficking in human beings

Trafficking in human beings – often referred to as “modern-day slavery” – has been recognized as a major challenge to civilized society and a horrendous crime against humanity. The problem is of a multi-dimensional nature and needs to be addressed by simultaneous and concerted efforts on the national and international level.

In 2002 and 2003, the OSCE took a number of decisions that provided the basis for a co-ordinated approach in the fight against human trafficking. As a result, the Organization took on a central role in steering international co-operation in combating organized crime, defending the human rights of trafficked persons, and assisting participating States in the implementation of their commitments and translating theory into practice.

The Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings

Between 2000 and 2004, the Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SPTF) – placed under the auspices of the OSCE – led the way to the creation of a comprehensive regional strategy and the establishment of institutional mechanisms in this region. Having achieved the overall goal of south-eastern European countries taking on the ownership of this process, the SPTF began in 2004 to hand over the leadership in the fight against human trafficking to these States and their institutions.

In order to build on the positive accomplishments in the region and to keep the intensity of anti-trafficking activities at a high level, the SPTF took additional steps to strengthen the collaborative capacity of the governmental co-ordinators and the national structures on a regional basis. It transformed the Regional Clearing Point, established in Belgrade in July 2002 to collect regional data on victims of trafficking and victims assistance, into a new Nexus Institute, which will undertake innovative and ground-breaking research in the field of trafficking in persons – both qualitative and quantitative in nature – to provide the foundation for sounder, more informed and ultimately better policies and practice. This will enable research and policy implementation on human trafficking, anchor the mainstreaming of law enforcement training across the region, and ensure the implementation of the SPTF’s media project aiming at creating a strong regional reporting network on human trafficking in the region.

Following the appointment of the Chair of the SPTF as OSCE Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the SPTF closed its Secretariat in Vienna

in October 2004. An overview of the Task Force’s activities between 2000 and 2004 was published as a chronicle, entitled ‘South Eastern Europe’s Struggle against Trafficking in Persons’.

The OSCE Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

In accordance with a decision taken by the 55 OSCE Foreign Ministers at the Maastricht Ministerial Council in December 2003, the Chairman-in-Office appointed Helga Konrad, the Chair of the SPTF, on 10 May 2004 as the OSCE Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

The Special Representative’s mandate is to enhance and facilitate co-operation among participating States in the fight against human trafficking, to give assistance in the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, and to improve the Organization’s co-operation with other international organizations in this field.

Under the heading of ‘Alliance against Trafficking in Persons’, the Special Representative held a first high-level conference, followed by a series of expert meetings in order to develop joint anti-trafficking strategies with other international actors and to provide the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation with a co-ordinated approach in the fight against trafficking in persons. As part



The IOM is a key partner in the OSCE’s fight against human trafficking.

of this strategy and in order to make these efforts sustainable, the Special Representative built partnerships with organizations such as the Council of Europe, the UNODC, UNICEF, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the IOM, and the UNHCR. She also established close relationships with NGOs, includ-

ing *Terre des Hommes*, *Save the Children* and *Anti-Slavery International*. A number of country visits by the Special Representative gave the OSCE’s fight against human trafficking a higher profile, uncovered the real problems faced by participating States, especially those of destination, and stimulated the dialogue between authorities and civil society. In addition, the Special Representative addressed a substantial number of regional and international conferences and meetings.

The OSCE Secretariat’s Anti-Trafficking Assistance Unit

In October 2004, the OSCE established the Anti-Trafficking Assistance Unit (ATAU). The task of the Unit, which forms part of the OSCE Secretariat, is to support the Special Representative’s activities and to improve co-operation and co-ordination between the OSCE Institutions and other structures.

Together with the Special Representative, the ATAU organized workshops gathering international experts in the framework of the ‘Alliance against Trafficking in Persons’ and participated in various other events that focused on anti-trafficking issues. These included:

- a seminar in Trier on ‘Trafficking in Persons: Towards a Common Legal Framework in the EU’;
- the Consultative Workshop of the European Experts Group on Trafficking in Human Beings in the Framework of the EU Forum for the Prevention of Organized Crime, held in Brussels;
- a seminar at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna on ‘Trafficking in Human Beings in South-Eastern Europe: the case of Moldova’; and
- ‘STOP – International Conference against Child Trafficking’ in Osnabrück.

In addition, ATAU members accompanied the Special Representative on country visits and to regional and international conferences and meetings.

As focal point in the OSCE Secretariat for the co-ordination of all anti-trafficking issues and liaison with the relevant regional, national and international organizations, the ATAU advised and assisted the participating States and the OSCE field operations on the issue. The Unit also established a close working relationship with OSCE Institutions and other structures that are involved in the fight against human trafficking, such as the ODIHR, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, and the Strategic Police Matters Unit.

Northern Caucasus

With regard to the situation in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation, the Chairmanship continued the dialogue initiated by the Netherlands Chair with the Russian Federation in 2003, aimed at an agreement on a long-term OSCE programme of technical co-operation in Chechnya.

SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

The OSCE continued to foster peace and stability in south-eastern Europe by enhancing regional co-operation, and promoting and supporting legislative reform, respect for human and minority rights, and institution- and capacity-building. It made further concrete efforts to facilitate, in co-operation with its partner organizations, the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, to assist in enhancing the capacity of domestic judiciary systems and to monitor domestic war crimes trials.

The Chairman-in-Office visited **Kosovo**, together with NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, on 23 March to assess the situation following the violent unrest in the area. In Pristina, he called the violence “unacceptable” and said that “it is not welcome on the path to Europe”. The Chairman-in-Office conveyed the message that the OSCE, working with its international partners in Kosovo, was prepared to continue to work to secure peace and stability. He also pledged the OSCE’s assistance towards free and democratic elections in October 2004. Following the visit, the Chairman-in-Office went to Belgrade to discuss the situation in Kosovo with Serb leaders. At the invitation of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the Chairman-in-Office and the OSCE Secretary General attended meetings in September at the UN Headquarters in New York, which focused on the way forward in Kosovo, including the international community’s tasks and responsibilities in the foreseeable future.

“OSCE activities in the Balkans should remain part of an integrated multilateral approach.”

Solomon Passy

On 29 March, the Chairman-in-Office visited **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. During his visit, he reiterated the OSCE’s continued interest and support for the country’s political stabilization and the ongoing process of reforms, in particular in defence and education.

On 10 and 11 May, the Chairman-in-Office travelled to **Croatia**. His visit focused on refugee return, property restitution, occupancy tenancy rights, and co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The Chairman-in-Office and Croatia’s Prime Minister Ivo Sanader made field trips to Zadar and other communities to observe first hand the situation of refugees and returnee families and to assess the efforts of the Croatian Government to facilitate the return and the re-integration of refugees, through the reconstruction of destroyed properties, repossession of occupied properties, and the provision of alternative housing to Bosnian Croat settlers.

The Special Co-ordinator of the **Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe**, Erhard Busek, was invited by the Chair to address the Permanent Council on 20 May. There was a common understanding that the repatriation of refugees and IDPs should be given priority, as lack of progress could be an obstacle to long-term stability in the region. The continued co-operation between the OSCE and the Stability Pact – in areas such as stabilizing population movements, combating organized crime, trafficking in human beings, and border management – was noted with appreciation, as was the OSCE’s contribution to the follow-up to the Ohrid Conference.

Between 18 and 21 October, the Chairman-in-Office toured south-eastern Europe, visiting Skopje, Pristina, Belgrade, Podgorica and Tirana. In Kosovo, the main purpose of his visit was to become better acquainted with the situation on the ground and the OSCE’s activities on the eve of the Kosovo Assembly elections on 23 October. In Pristina, he urged politicians from all sides to reach out to the electorate by inviting them to participate in the elections. He strongly encouraged Kosovo Serbs to take part in the polls. In Skopje, he discussed the implication of the 7 November referendum on decentralization. In Belgrade and Podgorica, he urged Serbia and Montenegro to speed up reforms related to their OSCE commitments to achieve their objective of European and Euro-Atlantic integration. The Chairman-in-Office also discussed concrete forms of co-operation between the OSCE and the respective countries, taking their foreign policy objectives into account.

The Chairman-in-Office strongly supported an initiative co-ordinated by the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC), which was meant to enhance inter-state co-operation in war crimes proceedings. The CPC, together with three OSCE Missions in south-eastern Europe and the ODIHR, considered ways in which the OSCE could facilitate a direct and concrete dialogue among practitioners from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia and Montenegro for the purpose of enhancing inter-state co-operation in dealing with war crimes proceedings, such as investigations, prosecutions, and trials. ‘Witness issues’ were the topic of a first OSCE-facilitated expert meeting that took place in Palić, Serbia, on 29 and 30 November. The meeting took place in a spirit of regional ownership and was considered as an excellent starting point in the broader, more technical process that the OSCE has launched in this important field.

CENTRAL ASIA

The Bulgarian Chairmanship increased its attention to the region of Central Asia, offering assistance to the five participating Central Asian countries in their pursuit of political, social and economic reform. The Chairmanship aimed at enhancing the States’ awareness of the wide range of opportunities available to them through the OSCE and how a balanced approach to the three OSCE dimensions could help boost the reform process.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship sought to enhance the relationship between the OSCE and the Central Asian countries by fostering an open and regular dialogue. When he visited the five Central Asian States and Afghanistan in April, the Chairman-in-Office

was received by each Head of State and met the respective Foreign Ministers as well as representatives of civil society.

During the Chairman-in-Office's visit to **Uzbekistan**, the key topics discussed included education, the fight against terrorism in light of the April bombings in Tashkent and election preparation. The Chairman-in-Office opened the Ministerial Conference on Education as an Investment into the Future, which took place in Tashkent on 5 April. In his statement, he underlined the key role of education in building security, ensuring political stability and reducing poverty.

In **Kazakhstan**, discussions revolved around the country's bid for the OSCE Chairmanship in 2009, water resource management, anti-trafficking activities, and elections. In **Kyrgyzstan**, the Chairman-in-Office stressed the importance of regional initiatives such as the OSCE Academy, elections, combating terrorism, prison reform and border issues. In **Tajikistan**, issues pertaining to demining, tax reform, labour migration, media and elections were the focus of talks.

During the Chairman-in-Office's visit to **Turkmenistan**, enhanced co-operation between Ashgabad and the OSCE were discussed as well as media issues and the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking. Younal Loutfi, Vice-Chairman of the Bulgarian National Assembly, also visited Turkmenistan at the beginning of December following a request by the Chairman-in-Office. Issues related to the country's forthcoming elections, combating terrorism, education, national minorities and access for the International Committee of the Red Cross to prisons were reviewed.

The re-appointment of former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari as **Personal Envoy of the Chairman-in-Office for participating States in Central Asia** further demonstrated the Bulgarian Chairmanship's commitment to continued engagement with the five Central Asian participating States. President Ahtisaari maintained contacts at the highest political level in every State and followed up issues discussed during the Chairman-in-Office's visit in April. He visited Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan twice in 2004, and Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan once. In his discussions, President Ahtisaari focused on elections, freedom of the media and other issues related to the political, economic and environmental developments in the respective countries.

EASTERN EUROPE

Moldova

The Bulgarian Chairmanship was actively involved in finding solutions to the Transnistrian conflict. The efforts of the Chairmanship began with consultations between the mediators who convened in Sofia in January, resulting in promising reactions from both the Moldovan and Transnistrian parties to the proposals presented. As a result, subsequent consultations between the mediators were held in Belgrade in February, culminating in the first round of negotiations of the five-sided format in Tiraspol and Chisinau in April. These were the first such talks in six months. A follow-up meeting was held in May.

The Chairman-in-Office visited Moldova in June, meeting all parties and expressing support for the documents proposed by the mediators as a basis for a political settlement as well as concern over the lack of progress in the implementation of the OSCE Istanbul Summit commitments concerning the Russian military forces.

The Chairmanship also closely followed the developments linked to the crisis involving the Moldovan schools teaching in the Latin script in Transnistria. Bulgarian Deputy Foreign Minister Petko Draganov visited Moldova in July to assist the efforts of the OSCE Mission in Moldova in the search for solutions to the rising tensions between the two parties over this issue.

As the crisis deepened, the Chairman-in-Office appointed former Bulgarian President Petar Stoyanov as his **Personal Envoy for Moldova**. President Stoyanov's visit to Chisinau and Tiraspol in September demonstrated the Chairmanship's commitment to seeking an overall settlement of the dispute. However, despite the continuing work of the mediators and some positive developments during the first half of the year, there was a lack of progress towards a comprehensive political settlement.

The Chairmanship tried to break the deadlock in the negotiation process by convening a meeting of the mediators in Sofia on 11 and 12 October. This was followed by a meeting in Varna, Bulgaria, on 8 and 9 November with the participation of the mediators, and representatives from the Republic of Moldova and from Transnistria. Work on confidence- and security-building measures was continued through the end of the year.

In all its contacts, the Chairmanship called upon the parties to the conflict to establish and strengthen a working dialogue, which could eventually lead to a more effective and lasting solution. Additional efforts are still needed to find a formula for a comprehensive settlement on the basis of strengthening Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity while providing a special status for Transnistria.

Belarus

A representative of the Chairmanship paid a visit to Minsk in March for consultations on relations between the OSCE and Belarus, during which preparations for the visit of the Chairman-in-Office were also discussed. The Chairman-in-Office visited Minsk in June to discuss ways of enhancing co-operation between the OSCE and the host country in light of OSCE commitments and to collect first-hand information on the situation in Belarus. The Chairman-in-Office also took the opportunity to convey the OSCE's message in the context of specific issues of concern, such as the trend towards the deterioration of the situation with civil society, NGOs, mass media and political parties. In anticipation of the parliamentary elections on 17 October, the Chairman-in-Office stressed the need to conduct free and fair polls. He supported the OSCE Office in Minsk in pursuing the activities set out in its mandate, in co-operation with the Belarusian authorities and civil society, towards assisting the country to live up to its OSCE commitments.

International mediation during Ukraine's electoral crisis: the OSCE's role

For several weeks in autumn 2004, Ukraine found itself under the spotlight of the international media. Allegations of vote rigging in the second round of the presidential election on 21 November, contested by Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich and opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko, had provoked a serious political crisis in the country. In what soon became known as the 'Orange Revolution', hundreds of thousands of people gathered on the main square in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, and millions took to the streets all across the country. Pictures of Ukrainian citizens standing in the cold and protesting peacefully – but also resolutely – for their right to free and fair elections dominated the TV screens for 17 days.

Finding a political compromise

The crisis was finally resolved with the help of international mediation. In November and December, three roundtable meetings were convened in Kyiv's Mariinsky Palace. At the request of the Chairman-in-Office, OSCE Secretary General Ján Kubiš took part in all three meetings. He joined a group of high-level political figures, including President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland, President Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania, EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, and the Speaker of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Boris Grizlov. On the Ukrainian side, participants included the then incumbent President Leonid Kuchma, Chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament Vladimir Lytvyn, and the two presidential contenders.

The first meeting on 26 November provided the country's authorities and the opposition with the first opportunity to meet and negotiate since the beginning of the crisis. A joint statement was adopted, calling all sides to refrain from the use of force and to start political negotiations. This call was repeated by the international mediators in meetings on 1 and 6 December.

The discussions created a good basis for the political compromise reached on 8 December. The Parliament voted for a broad package of agreements, including amendments to the Law on Elections of the President of Ukraine, aimed at preventing fraud and falsification, and amendments to the Ukrainian Constitution directed at reforming the country's political system and attaining a better balance between the branches of power.

This compromise paved the way for the peaceful resolution of the crisis and for the conduct of free, fair and transparent repeat elections during the second round of the presidential poll.

Largest-ever OSCE election observation mission

These repeat elections, held on 26 December, were monitored by an all-time high of OSCE observers. Some 1,300 international monitors were deployed to Ukraine by the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.



An ODIHR Election Observation Mission had originally arrived in Kyiv on 31 August to observe the 31 October presidential election. Headed by Ambassador Geert-Hinrich Ahrens, the Mission included 57 experts and long-term observers, charged with the responsibility of monitoring the election campaign, the legislative framework and its implementation, the media situation and the work of the election administration and relevant government bodies. On the eve of election day, the team was joined by 600 short-term observers to follow voting and counting. The Chairman-in-Office appointed Bruce George, President Emeritus of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, to lead the short-term election observers.

The observers reported a number of concerns about this first-round electoral process, including bias by the state media, interference by the state administration in favour of Prime Minister Yanukovich, the disruption or obstruction of opposition campaign events by the state authorities, and inadequacies in the Central Election Commission's handling of complaints.

Since none of the candidates obtained an absolute majority in the first round, a second round of voting took place on 21 November. The Central Election Commission (CEC) announced that in the second round, Mr. Yushchenko and Mr. Yanukovich ob-

tained 46.61 per cent and 49.46 per cent of the votes respectively. Again, the Election Observation Mission came to the conclusion that the second round had failed to address election irregularities and lacked transparency, especially in the tabulation of votes.

"While this was certainly a competitive election, it was not conducted on a level playing field," Mr. Ahrens said.

Following a ruling of the Supreme Court of Ukraine on 3 December invalidating the second round and a subsequent decision of the CEC of Ukraine on 4 December, a re-run of the second round was scheduled for 26 December. The importance of the re-run did not escape the OSCE participating States when they decided to strengthen the Election Observation Mission to about 1,300 monitors.

The observers noted that campaign conditions for the repeat second round were markedly more equal, observers received fewer reports of pressure on voters, the election administration was more transparent, and the media was more balanced than in the previous rounds.

"I cannot express to you how delighted I am to say that, in our collective view, Ukraine's elections have moved substantially closer to meeting OSCE and other European standards in such a short period of time," said Bruce George.

"In our judgment the people of this great country can be truly proud that they took a great step towards free and democratic elections, in electing the next president of Ukraine."

Ukraine

Since his meeting with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Konstantyn Gryshchenko on 14 April, the Chairman-in-Office has been forthright in outlining the assistance that the OSCE could provide to Ukraine's electoral process, beginning with the first round of the electoral process on 31 October. The OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine was engaged in the run-up to the elections through a project that assisted in improving the electoral process.

The country's presidential election put Ukraine and the OSCE in the spotlight. The ODIHR was outspoken in its criticism of some aspects of the election process. Following the second round on 21 November and the subsequent political crisis, the Chairman-in-Office, in a statement issued on 24 November, urged the Ukrainian authorities "to investigate, in a proactive and timely manner, the irregularities which were identified". He also designated the OSCE Secretary General as his envoy to join other international mediators at roundtable discussions to help bring about an end to the crisis.

On 4 December, the Chairman-in-Office issued a statement welcoming the decision of the Ukraine's Supreme Court to declare the second round of the presidential election invalid and pledged full support of the OSCE for a re-run of the vote. He noted that the Supreme Court decision echoed the findings of international observers, including the ODIHR, and said that "the decision will make it possible to find a peaceful outcome to the present political crisis". He called on the Ukrainian authorities to conduct a fair campaign and underlined, in particular, the need for unbiased reporting in state-controlled media.

Ukraine was also on the agenda of the Ministerial Council in Sofia. In his opening remarks, the Chairman-in-Office said that the victors in the process were democracy and the rule of law and emphasized the OSCE's key role in election monitoring and as a facilitator. He called on participating States to support the international monitoring effort of the second round's re-run. With close to 1,300 monitors, the OSCE's efforts to monitor the re-run elections on 26 December were significant.

Co-operation with other international organizations

Further development of relations between the OSCE and partner organizations and institutions was one of the Bulgarian Chairmanship's priorities.

Establishment of closer working ties with the **United Nations** (UN) was supported throughout the year by the Chairmanship. In July 2004, the Chairman-in-Office took an active part in the UN Security Council meeting with regional organizations on the theme 'Co-operation between the United Nations and Regional Organizations in the Stabilization Processes'. At the invitation of the UN, the Chairman-in-Office, together with the Secretary General and high-level EU and NATO representatives, participated in a meeting that enabled an exchange of views on the way forward in Kosovo. In October, the Bulgarian Deputy Foreign Minister addressed the

59th Session of the UN General Assembly dedicated to the Co-operation between the UN and the OSCE.

Efforts were made throughout the year to strengthen relations between the OSCE and the **European Union** (EU). Meetings between the OSCE and the EU Ministerial Troikas were held during the Irish and the Dutch Presidencies on the margins of the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council in January and July. Further meetings of the OSCE and the EU Political and Security Committee troikas were hosted in Vienna in February and October. The fact that the Netherlands held the EU Presidency and was part of the OSCE Troika at the same time made matters easier. The Chairmanship maintained also close ties with the EU Presidency, the Council Secretariat and the European Commission at the policy level. A major concern of the Bulgarian Chairmanship was to continue a dialogue with EU member States on relevant developments within the OSCE and promote the formulation of EU positions supportive of the OSCE's policy. To promote a smooth flow of information and co-ordination, several EU representatives were invited to address the Permanent Council, including the Irish and Netherlands Foreign Ministers and the Commissioner in charge of External Relations.

"In view of the scope of the challenges ahead, co-operation with other international organizations is of the highest importance."
Solomon Passy

Relations with the **Council of Europe** featured especially prominently on the OSCE agenda in 2004. The OSCE's Chairman-in-Office responded positively to an initiative by the Norwegian Chairmanship of the Council's Committee of Ministers to strengthen relations and launch closer co-operation between the two organizations. This was one of the main items on the agenda of the meeting between the Chairmen of the two organizations, which took place in Sofia on 13 October. The Ministers agreed that there was scope for enhanced interaction to ensure that the OSCE and the Council of Europe avoided unnecessary duplication and fully met the expectations of participating and member States. On 2 December, the OSCE Permanent Council adopted a decision on enhanced co-operation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe, which would lead to the establishment of an OSCE-Council of Europe Co-ordination Group.

The Chairmanship made a systematic effort to have a regular dialogue with the **North Atlantic Treaty Organisation** (NATO). The Chairman-in-Office addressed the North Atlantic Council and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in January and November respectively, bringing issues related to OSCE-NATO co-operation to the attention of Member and Partner States. On the occasion of his address to the North Atlantic Council, the Chairman-in-Office met Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer to discuss further enhancement of OSCE-NATO co-operation at all levels. Members of the OSCE Troika were also involved in working-level consultations between the OSCE Secretariat and representatives of NATO's international staff.

The Chairmanship also participated in the regular Tripartite Meeting, which includes the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, and is attended by the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, the European Commission, the ICRC, and the IOM. It was also present at the Target-oriented Meeting at expert level within an expanded Tripartite format. Both meetings were hosted by the OSCE in Vienna. The Tripartite meeting was devoted to addressing threats to security and stability in the 21st century and co-operation in the field, while the Target-oriented Meeting focused on activities of and co-operation between partner international organizations in the southern Caucasus.

The Chairmanship conducted a series of consultations with partner organizations on the ad hoc consultative mechanism. Proposed within the Maastricht Strategy, the mechanism is a tool offered by the OSCE as a flexible framework for consultation by initiating contacts with relevant organizations and institutions as a specific threat arises or intensifies.

Strengthening co-operation with other regional and sub-regional organizations was also promoted by the Chairmanship. In May, the Chairman-in-Office participated in the Arab Summit held in Tunisia.

Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation

In 2004, further to the decisions adopted at the Maastricht Ministerial Council, there was a marked increase in contacts at various levels between the OSCE and its Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation. Based on the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century, participating States adopted PC Decision No. 571, which identified additional fields of co-operation and interaction with Partners for Co-operation for the purpose of enhancing mutual security and to encourage them to voluntarily implement OSCE norms, principles and commitments as a means to further interact with the OSCE.

A comprehensive report on this improved co-operation was developed by the informal Group of Friends, chaired by the Ambassador of Finland, based on all three OSCE dimensions. As a result, the Ministerial Council in Sofia adopted a decision on the OSCE and its Partners for Co-operation (Decision No. 17), underlining the importance of the report, which is based on an exchange of various views, including with the OSCE Partners for Co-operation. The decision tasks the Permanent Council and the FSC to remain seized of the matter.

The Partner States were also invited more frequently as observers to Permanent Council and FSC meetings. They participated more regularly in meetings of the respective Mediterranean and Asian Contact Groups, which bring together the OSCE participating and Partner States.

Representatives of the Partners for Co-operation took part in OSCE events to promote awareness on tolerance and non-discrimination, the Annual Security Review Conference, and a Technical Experts Conference on Border Management and Security organized by the OSCE and the UNODC.

The OSCE-Japan Conference, co-hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the OSCE, on 'The Search for Effective Conflict Prevention in the New Security Circumstances: European Security Mechanisms and Security in Asia' took place in Tokyo on 15 and 16 March. The Chairmanship was represented by the Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, who emphasized that the conference presented an excellent opportunity to share experiences on conducting crisis prevention activities and to discuss ways of promoting the dialogue between the OSCE and the Asian Partners for Co-operation on security matters.

Participants highlighted the fact that both regions faced similar challenges and that they shared a common interest to find appropriate responses in the new security environment. A number of proposals for follow-up were made and discussed during the meetings of the Asian Contact Group. Following this conference, an informal meeting of its participants with attendees in the ASEAN Regional Forum workshop on preventive diplomacy took place in Tokyo on 16 and 17 March so that members of the Forum could share the conclusions of the OSCE-Japan Conference and the experience of the OSCE in preventive diplomacy. The event was co-chaired by Japan and Thailand.

The annual OSCE Mediterranean Seminar, co-organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt and the OSCE, on 'Addressing Threats to Security in the Twenty-First Century: Interaction between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation' was convened in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, on 18 and 19 November. The Chairman-in-Office said that the OSCE was pleased to share its considerable experience in confidence-building and in fostering tolerance and non-discrimination with the Mediterranean countries as a contribution to building a just and lasting peace in the region. A number of concrete suggestions were made, including further joint work on issues concerning tolerance and respect, the integration of migrants, including their rights and obligations, and the responsibilities of host countries. Several participants proposed that the OSCE play a role in the Palestinian elections scheduled for 9 January 2005.

A highlight in 2004 was the OSCE's engagement in Afghanistan. At the invitation of the country's Government, the OSCE deployed an OSCE Election Support Team to Afghanistan. It was the first time the OSCE had ever deployed an operation out of its region.

Closer and deeper interaction between the OSCE and Partner States was highlighted during the two Ministerial Troika meetings with counterparts from the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation. These events were chaired by the Chairman-in Office on 5 December on the eve of the Ministerial

Council meeting in Sofia. Participants felt that significant steps were taken in 2004 towards joint work and activities and that the outcome provided a solid basis for next year's work.

In his remarks to the Ministerial Council in Sofia on 6 December, the Chairman-in-Office called on his colleagues to go even further in reaching out since the OSCE had a lot to offer.

Reaching out to a Partner State: the Election Support Team to Afghanistan

In September, the OSCE broke new ground when, for the first time in its history, the Organization sent an election team to one of its Partners for Co-operation. A 42-person Election Support Team was deployed to Afghanistan to help the country conduct its first-ever presidential election on 9 October. This move came in response to a letter from Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah to the Chairmanship, inviting the Organization to send ODIHR experts. The Permanent Council agreed on 29 July to dispatch the Team in order to support efforts to foster democracy and human rights and strengthen stability in Afghanistan.

"The Bulgarian OSCE Chairmanship attaches great importance to assisting the normalization of Afghanistan and its steady progress towards democracy and respect for human rights. We believe that the presidential election on 9 October 2004 should accelerate the pace of these historic developments. The deployment of the Election Support Team demonstrates the OSCE's strong determination to assist an important neighbour and the Organization's ability to respond quickly and effectively."
OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy

The Team's mandate differed substantially from any previous OSCE election mission. Its key responsibility was not to observe the elections as such, but to analyse the electoral process and offer recommendations, where applicable, to the electoral management body. This analysis included particular issues such as voter registration, the work of electoral commissions, vote count and tabulation as well as complaint and appeal procedures.

The Team's deployment on 26 September was preceded by high-level visits to Kabul by several senior OSCE officials, including the Chairman-in-Office, who was there in April, and Secretary General Ján Kubiš in early September. A needs assessment mission by the OSCE Secretariat and the ODIHR visited Afghanistan in July. An advance party headed to Afghanistan some weeks prior to the full Team's deployment to prepare logistics and security for the arrival of the 28 election experts. Most of these were sent a week before polling day to the country's seven regional centres. The remainder of the two-person teams covered Kabul and its environs.

Apart from providing immediate and on-the-spot advice on how to improve the electoral management, the Team compiled important analytical data that helped overcome a sudden political crisis on polling day, when a coalition of presidential candidates threatened not to recognize the election over perceived voting irregularities. In addition, the Team prepared a set of recommendations to the electoral management body, which were issued in October, outlining in detail what needed to be done to allow for parliamentary elections scheduled for 2005.

"October 9 was a historic day in Afghanistan, and the millions who came to the polls clearly wanted to turn from the rule of the gun to the rule of law ... Our teams were deeply impressed by the fact that millions of Afghan men and women turned out yesterday in Iran and Pakistan as well as Afghanistan, waited patiently in line, often in snow, rain, and dust, in the face of threats to their lives, and cast their votes with enthusiasm. We do not yet know what their choices are, but we know they should be respected."

Ambassador Robert L. Barry, Head of the OSCE Election Support Team to Afghanistan



Alexander Nitzsche



Alexander Nitzsche

A total of 18 candidates ran for the position of head of state in Afghanistan's first-ever presidential election on 9 October.

The Work of the Permanent Council



Ambassador Ivo Petrov from Bulgaria, Chairman of the OSCE Permanent Council in 2004



In 2004, the Permanent Council was actively engaged in a range of issues that are high on the OSCE's agenda. Following up on the Maastricht Ministerial Council, participating States took a number of key decisions on counter-terrorism, on combating anti-Semitism, on tolerance and the fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination, and on promoting tolerance and media freedom on the Internet. An OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality was adopted, and decisions on establishing an Audit Committee and on Enhanced Co-operation with the Council of Europe were taken.

Partnership was strengthened through important decisions on sending an election support team to Afghanistan and granting Mongolia the status of Partner for Co-operation.

Discussion under 'Current Issues' in the Permanent Council was often lively, with participating States raising questions or comments about developments in the OSCE area and debating the role and future of the Organization. Active use was also made of the Preparatory Committee to enable adequate discussion on and preparation of decisions before their presentation to the Permanent Council.

Specialized discussions were carried out in a number of working groups that focused on issues ranging from specific financial and management issues and the preparation of the Annual Security Review Conference to more general thematic issues such as reform, borders, gender equality and anti-trafficking, combating terrorism, outreach, and improving the functioning and effectiveness of OSCE field operations.

The Permanent Council, chaired by Ambassador Ivo Petrov, was regularly briefed by Heads of Institution and Heads of Mission. In line with traditional practice, the Permanent Council took decisions on the extension of mission mandates. The Permanent Council was addressed by a number of special guests, including ten ministers.

As in previous years, the most intense period for the Permanent Council was in the run-up to the Ministerial Council when decisions were prepared and adopted for approval by the OSCE foreign ministers in Sofia. Attempts to reach consensus on a number of key issues kept delegations engaged until the very end of the year.

The Permanent Council had a heavy agenda in 2004 and demonstrated its importance as the Organization's main political forum and decision-making body.

Special guests who addressed the OSCE Permanent Council in 2004

	Special Guest	Topic of Address
22 January	Dick Roche , Minister for European Affairs of Ireland	Irish EU Presidency
5 February	Ilinka Mitreva , Minister of Foreign Affairs of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	EU and NATO enlargement
12 February	Heidi Tagliavini , Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to Georgia	Activities and priorities of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia relating to the settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia
16 February	Miomir Žužul , Minister of Foreign Affairs of Croatia	The Croatian Government's main policy goals
26 February	Kastriot Islami , Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania	Co-operation in south-eastern Europe and Albania's efforts to seek membership of the EU and NATO
1 April	Heikki Talvitie , EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus	Report on activities
22 April	Lucius Cafilisch , Member of the Bureau of the Court on behalf of the President of the Court of Conciliation and Arbitration	OSCE Court of Conciliation and Arbitration
13 May	Udo Janz , UNHCR Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina	OSCE-UNHCR collaboration in Bosnia and Herzegovina
20 May	Erhard Busek , Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe	Stock-taking on the Stability Pact's fifth anniversary
27 May	Bruce George , President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly	Farewell speech
18 June	Vuk Drašković , Foreign Minister of Serbia and Montenegro	Call for dialogue and decentralization in Kosovo
14 July	Bernard Rudolf Bot , Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands	Priorities of the Netherlands EU Presidency
15 July	Christopher Patten , Member of the European Commission in charge of External Relations	EU-OSCE co-operation
22 July	Walter Schwimmer , Outgoing Secretary General, Council of Europe	Building Europe: Agenda for a dream
22 July	Vasile Sova , Minister for Reintegration of Moldova	School crisis in Moldova's Transdnistrian region
29 July	Salome Zourabichvili , Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia	Latest events in Georgia
18 August	Salome Zourabichvili , Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia	Latest events in Georgia
9 September	Kassymzhomart Tokaev , Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan	Parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan
21 October	Javier Ruperez , Executive Director of the UN Counter- terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)	Seeking OSCE support in the fight against terrorism
21 October	Heikki Talvitie , EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus	Report on activities
11 November	Alcee L. Hastings , President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly	First speech of the new President including an activities report
25 November	Antonio Maria Costa , UNODC Executive Director	Report on opium cultivation in Afghanistan
30 November	Andrei Stratan , Minister of Foreign Affairs of Moldova	Moldova's views on current OSCE issues

Activities of the Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office

The Agreement on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Article II, Annex 1-B) and the Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control (Article IV, Annex 1-B, Dayton Peace Accords)

Making a huge step forward in the region's normalization process, the Parties to the Agreement on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina decided on 28 September to terminate the provisions to Article II of Annex 1-B of the Dayton Peace Accords. In their decision, they noted the exceptional progress made in the implementation of the CSBM regime and took into account the implementation of the Defence Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), which resulted in the creation of a single defence establishment. The termination of the Agreement does not preclude any of the Parties from agreeing to the voluntary continuation of any measure previously included or associated with the Agreement.

and noted the spirit of co-operation and transparency. The quality of the Annual Information Exchanges was of a high standard. Due to the continuous restructuring process of the Armed Forces, mid-year updates were provided by the Parties. Reduction of weapons proceeded accordingly.

At the fourth Review Conference on the Agreement, key decisions were taken aimed at closing certain loopholes, such as exempted equipment that allowed Parties to maintain large quantities of equipment above agreed ceilings. In accordance with Decision 1/26 taken by the Sub-Regional Consultative Commission (SRCC), a special agreement was reached on the reduction of armaments exempted for Research and Development up to a maximum of five per cent of each category limited by Article IV by the end of 2004. Progress was also made regarding the reduction of armaments held within the internal security forces.

The Personal Representative continued consultations with OSCE delegations to develop a long-term strategy consistent with the overall policy within the region, namely giving the Parties ownership of this process and streamlining the role, presence and responsibility of the international community. Within the confines of the Article IV Agreement, the policy on ownership has been achieved. The Personal Representative will continue to provide the Parties with guidance and technical support for implementing the inspection regime and analysis and expertise for managing the annual information data exchanges.

Office of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference

Negotiations towards the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict gained momentum in 2004, particularly with meetings between the Azerbaijani and Armenian Presidents and the so-called 'Prague Process' of meetings between the respective Foreign Ministers. This increased activity resulted in intensified work by the Personal Representative, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, in keeping the Chairmanship and the Minsk Group, including its Co-chairs, informed of developments.

The Personal Representative and his Office continued the mandated task of monitoring the front line to assess the military situation and to assist in reducing tension. This was especially important in



Under supervision of the Chairman-in-Office's Personal Representative for Articles II and IV, military units from both Bosnia and Herzegovina's Entities participated in a natural disaster training exercise.

The Parties to the Article IV Agreement continued to implement the arms control process in the region, which greatly contributed to the further stabilization process. As scheduled, 13 inspections involving experts from 28 OSCE countries were conducted by the Parties. The Personal Representative took part in two inspections conducted by a BiH team in Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro

June, when a raised number of cease-fire violations were reported. Reports from the Personal Representative gave early warning of this rise in tension and steps were taken to normalize the situation. The military situation on the front line appeared to have stabilized.

He also assisted the High-Level Planning Group in fulfilling its mandated tasks. Contact was maintained with organizations such as the EU, the Council of Europe, the UNHCR, the ICRC, and various international NGOs with relation to the major problems of internally displaced persons and refugees, prisoners of war, missing persons and detainees as well as mine clearance.

Confidence-building measures promoted by the Office between the sides were largely confined to what was needed to carry out monitoring activities and assist in the return of prisoners of war detained by the sides. Efforts continued to encourage contact between the sides at local level. Towards the end of the reporting period, the increased momentum towards the settlement of the conflict resulted in an agreement between the sides on an OSCE Minsk Group fact-finding visit to the occupied territories around Nagorno-Karabakh, to be held in early 2005.

The High-Level Planning Group

Established in 1994 at the Budapest Summit of the CSCE participating States, the High-Level Planning Group (HLPG) is tasked with making recommendations to the Chairman-in-Office for planning a multinational OSCE peacekeeping force for the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference. This includes plans for the establishment, force structure requirements, operations as well as the size and characteristics of this force.

In order to improve its current level of information, the HLPG maintained and expanded contacts with several international bodies in 2004, such as the Headquarters of the South Eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG) in Constanta, Romania, and the Multinational Stand-by High Readiness Brigade for United Nations Operations (SHIRBRIG), based in Copenhagen, Denmark.

In view of the continued delicate situation in the area of conflict, the HLPG was not able to carry out the much-needed operations and logistics reconnaissance mission to the conflict area. Instead, the Group participated in a number of monitoring missions on the line of contact, as it has done since September 1998.

The Personal Envoy of the Chairman-in-Office for the participating States in Central Asia

Appointed in 2003, former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari continued as the Personal Envoy of the Chairman-in-Office for Central Asia, his mandate being to assist the Chairman in maintaining contacts with the highest political levels of the participating States in Central Asia. To advance his mission, the Personal Envoy made two visits to Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan and one visit to Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

In addition to meeting with political leaders, President Ahtisaari fostered contacts and held negotiations with representatives from civil society, media, the international community and the Ambassadors of OSCE participating States. He also witnessed the developments of OSCE-supported projects such as the Labour Migration Information Centre in Dushanbe and the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, where he had a long discussion with the students.

With many elections held in the countries of the region in 2004 and due in 2005, elections were high on the agenda of the Personal Envoy in his discussions with the authorities. To help familiarize himself with the election laws and election systems, he met the chairs of the Central Election Commissions in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. President Ahtisaari reminded his interlocutors that free and fair elections were a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for democracy.

Other items in the discussions included education as one of the priorities of the Chairmanship, good governance, a moratorium on and eventual abolition of the death penalty as well as issues such as mine action, civil society development, and the combat of terrorism and extremism. In fulfilling his mandate, the Personal Envoy was supported by the Finnish NGO, *Crisis Management Initiative*.

Reports of the Chairpersons of the Contact Groups with the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation*

The Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation are: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia.
Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group in 2004: Slovenia

The Asian Partners for Co-operation are: Afghanistan, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mongolia and Thailand.
Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group in 2004: the Netherlands

Deepening interaction with the Partners for Co-operation. As a result of the decisions adopted in December 2003 at the Maastricht Ministerial Council, the year 2004 witnessed a richer, more focused and intensive dialogue between the OSCE and its Partners for Co-operation. The OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century and a subsequent decision on further dialogue and co-operation with the Partner States (PC Decision No. 571¹) provided an opportunity to discuss possible new avenues of interaction.

Discussions were carried out in the informal Group of Friends, chaired by the Ambassador of Finland. The importance of the resulting report, based on an exchange of various views, including with the Partners for Co-operation, was underscored by a Ministerial Council decision taken in Sofia in December 2004, which recognizes the increasing importance of the well-established co-operation between the OSCE and its Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation.

The work conducted in the Mediterranean and Asian Contact Group meetings in 2004 complemented the increased access of the Partner States to various OSCE activities, including to the Permanent Council and the FSC. The Chairman of the Permanent Council provided regular briefings on the Chairman-in-Office's current activities to the Contact Group meetings. The work of the Mediterranean and Asian Contact Group meetings was also linked to discussions in the informal Group of Friends on the Implementation of PC Decision No. 571.

Partner States participated actively in the OSCE's Berlin Conference on Anti-Semitism, the OSCE Meeting on the Relationship between Racist, Xenophobic and anti-Semitic Propaganda on the Internet and Hate Crimes, held in Paris, and the OSCE Conference on Tolerance and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination in Brussels. Partner States were invited to a Technical Experts Conference on Border Management and Security, organized by the OSCE and the UNODC and to the Joint OSCE PA-CPC Conference on democratic control and parliamentary oversight of armed forces and police and security forces. They also took part in the OSCE's Annual Security Review Conference.

Mediterranean Contact Group. Under the Chairmanship of Slovenia, eight Mediterranean Contact Group meetings took place in 2004, often preceded by meetings at the working level of Con-

tact Points. The agendas of those meetings reflected a balance in all three OSCE dimensions – including, among others, an exchange of views with the Chairman of the Forum for Security Co-operation, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the Director of the ODIHR.

Other OSCE activities relevant to the Mediterranean Partners were discussed, ranging from the combat against human trafficking to gender issues and border management matters. In addition, a discussion took place with the Head of the Secretariat's Action against Terrorism Unit on the OSCE's activities in this context, including a Workshop on Countering the MANPADS Threat to Civil Aviation Security at Airports.

The Contact Group also invited representatives from other international organizations, such as the Director of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) of the Council of Europe and representatives of the European Union Presidency on the EU's Barcelona Process.

Sharing knowledge of Confidence- and Security-Building Measures. In response to interest expressed by the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, the Chairman of the Mediterranean Contact Group organized an unprecedented working visit and informal exchange of views in May, which was based on selected OSCE Confidence- and Security-Building Measures under the Vienna Document 1999.

The event included a simulation of an evaluation visit at a military base in Maribor. Such exercises represent not only an important contribution to confidence-building in the Mediterranean, but also a useful tool to demonstrate the OSCE *acquis* to Partner States. It is foreseen that similar events could take place in all three OSCE dimensions in 2005.

Promoting further build-up of relations through side-events. At the request of the Mediterranean Partners, side-events were organized in parallel to several OSCE activities. These events, which were chaired by the Chairman of the Mediterranean Contact Group, aimed at further promoting relations between the OSCE and the Partners. They included discussions on human resource development, which took place on the margins of the Economic Forum in Prague, and meetings to discuss the OSCE's election

* See also reports of the Chairman-in-Office and the Secretary General on Interaction with the Mediterranean and Asian Partners and Regional Organizations Beyond the OSCE Area.
1 On Further Dialogue and Co-operation with the Partners for Co-operation and Exploring the Scope for Wider Sharing of OSCE Norms, Principles and Commitments with Others.

observation experience held alongside the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw.

Parliamentary delegations from the OSCE States and the Mediterranean Partners also participated in side-events organized both at the Winter and Annual Sessions of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The OSCE Secretary General and the Chairman of the Mediterranean Contact Group participated in the Second Mediterranean Forum of the Parliamentary Assembly held in Rhodes on 1 October.

OSCE Mediterranean Seminar. Hosted by Egypt in Sharm El Sheikh in November, the 2004 Mediterranean Seminar was dedicated to 'Addressing Threats to Security in the Twenty-First Century: Interaction between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.' The two-day event emphasized the importance of the OSCE Mediterranean dimension and the increasing interaction between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation against the backdrop of current global threats and challenges to security. The Seminar was attended by 37 participating States, all the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, two Asian Partners, and representatives of other international organizations and institutions.

One of the main messages emanating from the Seminar was the recognition that the global security threats needed to be addressed jointly. Suggestions for activities included further work on issues of tolerance and respect, and a stronger focus on the question of the integration of migrants and on their rights and obligations. A proposal was also made for the OSCE to consider a role in supporting the Palestinian presidential election on 9 January 2005.

Asian Contact Group. Under the Chairmanship of the Netherlands, the focus of the four Asian Contact Group meetings in 2004 was on ongoing work within the OSCE, preparations for the 2004 OSCE-Japan Conference and the 2005 OSCE-Korea Conference. Subjects discussed included the OSCE Border Security and Management Concept, joint efforts to counter terrorism in view of the Follow-up Meeting to the UN Security Council-Counter Terrorism Committee Special Meeting and preparations for the 12th Economic Forum. Discussions also dealt with the presidential election in Afghanistan and the role of the OSCE Election Support Team in this context.

OSCE-Japan Conference. In March, some 180 representatives of participating States, Asian and Mediterranean Partner States, international organizations, academic institutions and NGOs from Asia and Europe met in Tokyo for the OSCE-Japan Conference. At the event, which was entitled 'The Search for Effective Conflict Prevention in the New Security Circumstances: European Security Mechanisms and Security in Asia', proposals were brought forward to organize joint events with partners in Asia, notably the ASEAN Regional Forum, on combating trafficking in small arms and light weapons and in human beings.

Following the Conference, participants met informally with members of the ASEAN Regional Forum who had attended a workshop on preventive diplomacy, chaired by Japan and Thailand. The

objective of the workshop had been to share among the attendees the conclusions made at the OSCE-Japan Conference and the OSCE's experience in preventive diplomacy. The event was a useful step in building further links between the OSCE and the ASEAN Regional Forum.

OSCE-Korea Conference in April 2005. The second OSCE-Korea Conference, focusing on 'New Security Threats and a New Security Paradigm', is scheduled to take place in Seoul on 25 and 26 April 2005. It is expected that the event will be attended by OSCE participating States, Partners for Co-operation, representatives of international organizations and institutions, ASEAN Regional Forum member States as well as civil society representatives.

OSCE Election Support Team to Afghanistan. In response to a letter by Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah to the OSCE Chairman-in-Office inviting the ODIHR to observe the country's first presidential election in October, the Permanent Council decided in July to establish the Election Support Team to Afghanistan. The Team, led by Ambassador Robert Barry, was sent to Afghanistan to analyse aspects of the electoral process such as voter registration, the work of electoral commissions, vote count and tabulation, and the complaint and appeal procedures.

The OSCE's support to the country paid tribute to the importance of democratic elections for fostering democracy and human rights and furthering stability in Afghanistan and for contributing to international efforts to combat terrorism. The OSCE's engagement was widely welcomed as contributing to Afghanistan's stability. The Chairman-in-Office also received an invitation for the OSCE to supervise Afghanistan's parliamentary elections scheduled for spring 2005. (For more on the OSCE Election Support Team to Afghanistan, see page 25.)

Ministerial Troika meetings with Partner State representatives. On the eve of the 12th Ministerial Council meeting in Sofia, the Ministerial Troika met their counterparts, respectively, from the Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. Among other issues, they discussed interaction between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners on addressing contemporary threats to security and stability in the context of the implementation of PC Decision No. 571 as well as proposals for consolidating dialogue and joint activities.

Mongolia – a new Partner for Co-operation. Mongolia was granted the status of Partner for Co-operation following a request by the Mongolian Foreign Minister in a letter to the Chairman-in-Office. This followed the adoption of a Permanent Council decision on 2 December stating that Mongolia had supported the OSCE principles and objectives and shared its comprehensive and co-operative approach to security and related issues of economic and human development. Mongolia, which shares common borders with the OSCE, expressed its interest in establishing close relations with the Organization through the exchange of views and information on various issues of mutual interest and participation in OSCE meetings and activities.