



INTERVIEW WITH THE INCOMING CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE

Finland and the OSCE come full circle

Finland, situated at the top of Europe geographically, has a much-envied economy and a talent for building strategic networks and alliances. Having concluded a successful EU presidency at the end of 2006, the country is now poised to head the OSCE in 2008. Finnish Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva, who became a parliamentarian at the age of 27 in 1975, the year the Helsinki Final Act was signed, will add the role of OSCE Chairman-in-Office to his other responsibilities. He had held several cabinet posts prior to his appointment as Foreign Minister in April 2007. A native of Turku with a master's degree in political science, Minister Kanerva is a keen runner and an official of several sports organizations. In the following interview with OSCE Spokesperson Martin Nesirky, he sets out some of the challenges for the Finnish Chairmanship.

Martin Nesirky: The place of Finland and its capital in OSCE history is arguably already guaranteed, not least because of the Helsinki Final Act. So, what prompted your country to take on the Chairmanship of the Organization in 2008?

Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva: I would like to turn the question around and ask: Why not? Of course Finland hosted not only the Dipoli consultations in the early 1970s and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) Summit in 1975, but also the tenth anniversary of the CSCE at the

ministerial level in 1985 and the follow-up Meeting and Summit of the CSCE in 1992. However, we have not yet exercised the Chairmanship of the “modern” OSCE, and we felt that our Chairmanship would provide continuity not only to Finnish foreign policy but also to the OSCE.

Commentators and countries alike have expressed concern about a growing polarization in the OSCE area. What can Finland do to revive the spirit of Helsinki?

There is no way of bringing the 1970s “back to the future”. Finland is proud of the spirit of Helsinki and the CSCE process, which helped Europe, its countries and citizens so much in ending the strict political, economic and military division of the continent. But the challenges are different today. I don't think it is quite correct to speak of polarization in a world which is — and will be — interdependent. I would rather consider that the sometimes heated debates in the OSCE and elsewhere are signs of a free exchange of ideas. Not only governments, but also members of parliaments, non-governmental organizations and civil society at large should be able to take part in our debates. **What priorities does Finland intend to promote and pursue during its Chairmanship? Why have you chosen them?**

I would welcome this question in my next interview. For now, I would like to

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let my colleague and friend, Foreign Minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos, bring the Spanish Chairmanship of 2007 to a successful conclusion. Finland will present its Chairmanship programme with our priorities in due course next January.

Some argue that each Chairmanship brings with it a new set of priorities for one year, diluting the overall cohesion and effectiveness of the Organization. What's your view?

That is a clear risk. We should avoid jumping from one set of priorities to another. The Secretary General has a key role to play in providing continuity, and so do the heads of OSCE institutions. However, the OSCE Chairmanship is not a bureaucratic exercise, but entails political leadership and guidance. And in setting priorities, any Chairperson-in-Office will use his or her political sense to keep the Organization relevant.

How would you characterize Finland's intended Chairmanship style and approach?

This question is rather forward-leaning and could best be answered by my colleagues when the time comes. I would like to see our Chairmanship as an honest effort to listen to all — but then to use the possibilities of the OSCE to the fullest extent and not get bogged down in the face of difficulties.

The OSCE has a mission statement that speaks of stability, prosperity and democracy and of the OSCE's practical value to its participating States. If you were to build on this and encapsulate Finland's OSCE aims in a slogan, what would it be?

I would like to use a slogan from the world of sports — also taking into account that the Beijing Olympics will be held next year — and say swifter, higher, stronger. There is sometimes room for improvement in our performance, and every athlete knows what it takes: practice.

What do you see as the main strengths and weaknesses of the OSCE?

The broad membership and the comprehensive concept of security are its universally recognized strengths. Another strength is its wide network with other governmental and non-governmental organizations. The OSCE can also take pride in its agility and flexibility when quick action is needed. The consensus principle is of course mainly a strength and a kind of trade mark for co-operative security. At times, however, it may also be a weakness, because decisions can be unduly delayed.

Finland has some world-renowned brands. What, for you, is the OSCE brand image and how could it be better marketed, in your view?

The brand image of the OSCE is known to a fairly small group of politicians, experts and researchers. Its image in Finland still bears the imprint of the 1975 success story. You need a first-class product to create a strong, positive

brand image *à la* Nokia. I call on everybody to join me in marketing OSCE products, which I believe can be first-class.

What do you see as the main challenge for your year in the hot seat, and how do you plan to tackle it?

I would like to pass on to my successor an OSCE which has not only survived the larger and smaller problems, but has also proved its effectiveness. That is the main challenge, and it can be tackled through good co-operation and with determination. I would like to point out that most of the problems concern not only the OSCE but many other organizations as well, so co-operation with them will also be needed.

On a practical note, how does a country of 5 million people prepare to lead an Organization covering so many countries, so many competing views and such a huge population?

This task has been entrusted to Finland by all the other participating States, so we take it that they won't question their own decision. Other smaller and equal-sized countries have had successful Chairmanships, including our Nordic neighbours. Finland is certainly not hesitant to exercise leadership in the OSCE, based on support by others.

What lessons have you learned from your Baltic neighbourhood co-operation that could be applied to the OSCE, for example in working with our Partner countries?

Situations in international relations cannot be compared. In Northern Europe and around the Baltic Sea, an incredible network of co-operation has grown up within a short time. Sub-regional co-operation has shown its strength. The OSCE's relations with its Mediterranean and Asian Partners could benefit from examples in which neighbours make an effort to settle their mutual problems while deepening relations with other countries and organizations at the same time.

Critics argue that the OSCE does not balance its work in the different areas or dimensions of security. Have we got the balance right, and if not, where should more or less emphasis go?

Here, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. I don't think that we can calculate mathematically where the balance between the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human dimensions should be. Finland will make an effort to keep the OSCE ready to address issues in all dimensions.

Would you like to see another summit in Finlandia Hall that would not only crown your Chairmanship, but also potentially introduce a new Helsinki generation?

Yes, I would, provided that the leaders of the OSCE countries were to have important decisions to make that would warrant such a lofty occasion. At the moment, I don't see that coming next year.

Varied voices, common concerns at the Permanent Council

"We have certainly helped raise the profile of the OSCE and highlighted its relevance. One needs to look no further than the list of high-level speakers we have had at the Permanent Council," said Carlos Sánchez de Boado, Spanish Permanent Representative to the OSCE, in a recent interview to mark the Chairmanship's final phase.

"The culmination of any Chairmanship is the Ministerial Council meeting, and this year in Madrid at the end of November will be no different," said the Ambassador, who has been serving as Chairperson of the Permanent Council in 2007. "We are firmly on the road to Madrid; we have covered much ground and the

way ahead is clear, but our journey is far from over. We have consulted and informed all the participating States about our ideas and projects. We have done this with all of them equally, because we believe that the Organization belongs to all of us and not to any one country or a group of countries."

Convening weekly at the Hofburg in Vienna, the Permanent Council is the Organization's regular body for political consultation and decision-making. The following are excerpts from the addresses of some of the dignitaries who came to Vienna especially to share their views with the representatives of the OSCE's 56 participating States and 11 Partners for Co-operation.



Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany, 18 January 2007. If European integration is a success story, then the OSCE has played an important role in that. During the Cold War, your predecessor organization, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), was one of the main forums in which East and West could come closer together. The CSCE was instrumental in helping overcome the division of Europe and allowing us Germans to reunite our country. Germany will never forget this historic contribution. And, not least, the OSCE has always been a symbol of close transatlantic relations.

The OSCE is the best option when it comes to ensuring security and co-operation in Europe and in neighbouring regions. The OSCE participating States have created the strictest and best interlinked conventional arms control instruments in the world. They made a vital contribution towards the transformation processes which became necessary when the Cold War ended. This security network has to be preserved, further developed and adapted to progress in military technology. It remains a key element in continuous confidence-building for security in Europe.

We should therefore actively promote our arms control successes in other regions. I am expressly in favour of the OSCE discussing this with its Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

The OSCE is the only forum on security policy within the pan-European context. Security and stability must be realized again and again through political commitment and hard work.



Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian of Armenia, 17 April 2007. Although Armenia may see this Organization as indispensable, there is no denying that its costs and benefits are being assessed very differently in various capitals. Some would like to further empower it; others are reluctant to do so. Our delegation is ready to fully engage in ensuring the robust viability of an OSCE that is very much a pillar of our foreign policy landscape, and also a partner in developing and instituting domestic democratic processes, including election reform.

Foreign Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk of Ukraine, 26 April 2007.

The change in the nature of global challenges has brought about a new agenda in the Organization. Energy security is one of the most prominent examples. Having been undervalued in the past, it deserves our most active and consistent attention today. No clear energy rules exist

in the world. We strongly believe that the energy challenge should shift to a certain independence for States and individuals. It should not be a challenge; it should be a safeguard for every country and for every individual.





OSCE

Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin of Kazakhstan, 30 April 2007. Assuming the Chairmanship of the OSCE would facilitate further development of the Kazakh political system and help further reform the country's society and political life in the direction of further democratization. A positive outcome regarding our bid for the 2009 Chairmanship could have a multiplicative effect on the modernization of our country and the region as a whole. It would encourage other Central Asian States to move towards liberalization and greater openness of their political and economic systems.

President Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania, 8 March 2007. For my country, the OSCE means "us", not "us and them". The dichotomy of "east of Vienna" and "west of Vienna" has no meaning for us. While much has been done to unite the OSCE area and to overcome the dividing lines of the past, we should recognize that there remain regions characterized by tensions and a lack of dialogue. As long as conflicts remain unsettled in the South Caucasus and Moldova and tensions continue in parts of south-eastern Europe, we will have work to do. Our joint responsibility here is to build confidence by challenging disagreements and to ensure the security, territorial integrity and sovereignty of participating States.

The ideal on which the OSCE is founded is dear to all the people of Lithuania. For many years, the OSCE has been our guide to democratic goals and values, and it has always inspired us to action. After having lived in imposed isolation, Lithuania has rightfully rejoined the family of Europe as a full member of the OSCE, the EU and NATO. The OSCE's values and commitments and the OSCE institutions helped guide us through this process. For this, the Lithuanian people are ever grateful.



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Foreign Minister Besnik Mustafaj of Albania, 8 March 2007. In view of Albania's progress in implementing its commitments and the prospect of its continued progress in the coming years, Albania has considered it opportune to offer its candidacy for the OSCE Chairmanship in 2012. With the expected consent by the participating States, a country in the Western Balkans would for the first time assume the Chairmanship of the Organization. Not only would this demonstrate the enhanced capacity of a country that has co-operated with, has been assisted by, and has benefited from the OSCE, it would also serve as an additional means to promote shared values and concerns within the region itself.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov of the Russian Federation, 23 May 2007. It is obvious that the future of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the future of missile defence are very topical issues that have direct relevance to European security and to the security of the entire Euro-Atlantic region.



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Foreign Minister Gela Bezhuashvili of Georgia, 14 June 2007.

We see the OSCE as an important international structure promoting peace and stability in the European continent and worldwide, and we are determined to enhance this role by strengthening the capability of this Organization through a results-oriented reform process. We support a cross-dimensional perspective to create solid linkages between the three OSCE dimensions. This is particularly important in the area of conflict prevention and resolution, and post-conflict rehabilitation. ... The only path we see to peace in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia is the same path that we see for all the people of Georgia: We must deliver on the promise of individual liberty, economic opportunity, quality of life and human security. This approach, I believe, reflects the spirit in which the OSCE was founded.

Foreign Minister Luís Amado of Portugal, 12 July 2007. In my capacity as President of the Council of the European Union, I would like to underline the importance of designing a complementary agenda with the OSCE. It is essential that we combine our respective instruments and tools in order to face the challenges ahead, especially in some critical scenarios.



... Although I believe that the most serious challenges to our common security now lie in the Mediterranean Basin, I am also conscious that work still has to be done to ensure the stabilization of the Balkans and the other regions of the OSCE area. In this regard, I would like to highlight how important the transatlantic link has been for the stability of Europe. I firmly believe that such a partnership has to remain central to our agenda. At the same time, Europe has to strengthen its strategic partnership with Russia. I see no better forum than the OSCE to try to bridge the remaining and diminishing gaps.

Vienna, 31 May 2007. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, accompanied by Spanish Ambassador Carlos Sánchez de Boado, Chairman of the Permanent Council.



Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice of the United States, 31 May 2007.

When I look at the countries that sit around this table and I think of the circumstances in which this Organization was founded ... I ask if anyone might have thought that this would all happen essentially through a process of peaceful change. And that for me is a great benefit and a great inspiration, as we look at a world that is in considerable turmoil now.

When I look at the important work that is being done in support of elections, in support of peacekeeping, in support of human rights, and in support of the security architecture that is the basis on which a Europe whole, free and at peace is emerging, I want to pledge to you that the United States will remain active in this Organization, intending to continue to play a leadership role, and to use the good offices of this institution for the important tasks ahead.

Prime Minister Ivo Sanader of Croatia, 10 July 2007. Our co-operation with the OSCE was extremely important and helpful in building institutions, in dealing with transition issues and in enhancing the democratic environment. The OSCE played a key role in post-conflict rehabilitation in our region,



promoting the comprehensive concept of regional security, which also includes protection of human rights and minority rights, democratization of society and the rule of law, support for the development of civil society and NGOs, and strengthening of tolerance and non-discrimination.

The engagement of the OSCE Mission beyond 2007, after 11 years of co-operation, would not be necessary. My Government is offering full and verifiable guarantees for the fulfilment of the remaining obligations.

Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić of Serbia, 17 July 2007. I want to share with you a sense of pride at being the first Foreign Minister of the Republic of Serbia to address this audience. My country, in a way, symbolizes both the continuity and the change of the past several decades — a continuity and a change that the OSCE itself has experienced. In a way, then, both Serbia and the OSCE have been barometers of change in Europe.

My country — then one of the six constituent republics of socialist Yugoslavia — played a crucial role in advancing what began in Helsinki more than 30 years ago: a process whose first stage culminated in the signing of what remains a fundamental tenet of the international system, the Helsinki Final Act.

... I firmly believe that we all share the same goal in the Western Balkans: the achievement of a solution for Kosovo's future status that promotes the consolidation of democratic values and institutions, a solution that promotes the economic transformation of the Western Balkans and the security architecture of all of Europe.

And I firmly believe that all of us here present — representatives of signatory countries of the Helsinki Final Act — support a solution that conforms to the values and the language of the Act itself.



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Foreign Minister of Montenegro Milan Rocen (right) and Spanish Ambassador Carlos Sánchez de Boado.



OSCE/SUSANNA LOOF

Foreign Minister Milan Rocen of Montenegro, 25 October 2007. Montenegro is recognized in the region today as a European success story, as well as a concrete success in terms of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. The role the OSCE played in this is immeasurable. In Montenegro's modern history, it will forever be noted that this was the first international organization we were admitted to as an independent State.

The OSCE Mission is of great importance in this phase of our development, supporting the reform processes in Montenegro. It has a positive role to play in projects related to reform of the police, strengthening of capacities for the fight against organized crime and corruption, building of institutions, reform of the judiciary, assistance to parliament, as well as transformation of the defence sector. Its role is particularly appreciated in the destruction of surplus weapons in Montenegro. We see the engagement of the OSCE as part of its EU agenda. We believe that the synergy and co-operation between EU and OSCE activities is vital.

Nickolai N. Bordyuzha, Secretary-General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, 13 February 2007. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a multifunctional military and political integration structure, has finally become a full-fledged international regional body. Currently, it comprises Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.



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I am pleased to note a rather high and productive level of co-operation with such an influential European organization as the OSCE. We intend to maintain the momentum in our relations, which are developing positively, and will continue to take an active part in the OSCE's Annual Security Review Conference and in the activities of the Forum for Security Co-operation, the Action against Terrorism Unit and the Conflict Prevention Centre.

At the initiative of the CSTO member States, the OSCE Ministerial Council and the Permanent Council have adopted a number of decisions on combating the threat of trafficking in narcotic drugs.

Our Organization's member States are genuinely interested in seeing more active OSCE structures established in the area of security. We find it useful to engage intensively in issues relating to arms control and confidence-building measures, within the OSCE format, in accordance with the *OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century*.