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The challenges of chairing a “delicate political instrument”

BY OSCE CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE MIGUEL ÁNGEL MORATINOS

Thanks to the OSCE’s concept of multi-dimensional and co-operative security and the varied instruments it has developed, the OSCE is well placed to assist in the implementation of relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, thus contributing to the co-ordinated responses needed to tackle the security challenges the world faces today.

The United Nations and the OSCE are joined together by their common determination to strengthen a rules-based international order founded in the respect for human rights and in co-operation in matters relating to security among States and societies.

The current OSCE Chairmanship has been strengthening the Organization’s overall objective: to construct a Europe that is free and at peace with itself, conscious of the fact

that challenges affecting security are inter-related and that co-operation is crucial in our globalized and interdependent world.

For Spain, the OSCE is more than a set of institutions that provide assistance to participating States; it is more than 19 field missions in 17 countries; and it is more than a permanent forum for dialogue in Vienna.

The OSCE is, above all, a project of strategic relevance. It embodies the common will of 56 countries to work together for a safer and more prosperous future. This concept, as well as its geographical area, stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, its wide experience, and the principle of equality underlying relations among the participating States, all make the Organization unique.

Spain is fully aware that some of the OSCE’s main objectives have not yet been reached. New challenges have emerged, which have inspired the efforts and activities of this Chairmanship. Europe has, without a doubt, made great progress since the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. Walls have fallen, families have been reunited, wars have ended and dramatic conflicts have been solved. We believe that we have made considerable strides in the direction of the New Europe, as called for in the Charter of Paris.

NOBLE GOALS

Our commitment to building peace and to strengthening democracies guides the actions of States and civil societies in the OSCE area. We pride ourselves in having assumed the responsibility for fulfilling these commitments. Although the task is far from easy, we will not lower our sights, especially at a time when tensions continue to simmer in the heart of the OSCE area.

When Spain sought the OSCE Chairmanship, it was aware of the challenges it was facing. We have invested a great deal, in terms of imagination, efforts and resources, into fostering a climate of trust among 56 States and encouraging civil societies to take an active part in fulfilling the noble goals that are the cornerstone of our Organization.

It has been a year of challenges for the OSCE. We have been reiterating our call to participating States to work together to overcome these difficulties, with the aim of bringing positions closer together and allowing space for a constructive consensus. In the past few years, we have come to the aid of Georgia in several serious incidents, such as in Abkhazia, and in the conflict zone between Georgia and South Ossetia. These events have been of concern to us all and have highlighted the need to generate trust and co-operation.

New York, 28 September 2007. The OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos, addresses the United Nations General Assembly.

As a result of the missile incident in Georgia on 6 August, the Spanish Chairmanship has opted for a forward-looking approach, proposing specific preventive measures to avoid similar incidents in the future. The preparation of the proposals and their approval and implementation has been a priority for the Spanish Chairmanship, as has been close co-operation between the United Nations and the OSCE to stabilize the situation in Georgia and the region.

Throughout 2007, the Co-Chairpersons of the Minsk Group, with the active support of the Personal Representative of the Spanish Chairmanship, Josep Borrell Fontelles, have continued their efforts to facilitate a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Although these intensive mediation efforts have not resulted in any breakthrough, the parties remain committed to continuing the negotiations and finding a common vision to overcome their remaining differences.

The OSCE is continuing to try to bring about a settlement of the Transdnistrian issue in Moldova, through its participation in the “five plus two” format of negotiations. The mediators are from the Russian Federation and Ukraine, and the observers are from the United States and the European Union.

During the past year and a half, we have tried to convince the parties to negotiate, as we share the conviction of other OSCE States that negotiations in this format are the most promising avenue to take to achieve a sustainable and lasting settlement. In this way, Moldova would be provided with excellent support, enabling it to develop and prosper at the heart of the European family.

Spain believes that, for peace to take root, it will not be enough to have signatures on official documents and treaties; we need to prepare the ground by working to overcome distrust and to build platforms for dialogue and understanding. The prospect of peace tomorrow requires action today in conflict zones, including the commitment of civil societies.

We are approaching the time for a decision on the future status of Kosovo. The OSCE and the Spanish Chairmanship have thrown their support behind attempts to find a just and lasting formula that will contribute to the stability of the region.

It is true that the OSCE has maintained a neutral position over the years concerning status — a fact acknowledged by all the communities of Kosovo. Being unbiased, however, does not mean being non-committal. Quite the contrary. Although the OSCE is not directly involved in the status negotiations, it

Tiraspol, 8 October.
Chairman-in-Office Miguel
Ángel Moratinos meets
Transdnistrian leader
Igor Smirnov.



has been contributing to the process of creating the necessary conditions on the ground for the implementation of the status settlement.

We are ready to stay on in Kosovo and to focus on monitoring aimed at protecting the rights of communities, particularly those concerning decentralization and the protection of cultural and religious sites. Within the OSCE, our hope is that Kosovo’s future status settlement will, in the end, be sanctioned by a new UN Security Council resolution.

The Central Asian States play a relevant and crucial role in strengthening security throughout the OSCE region. The fragility of Afghanistan, the terrorist threat, and drug trafficking and organized crime, along with serious structural difficulties such as those connected with the management of water resources, pose a challenge to our Organization.

SHARED INITIATIVES

We cannot ignore the fact that the situation in Afghanistan has an impact on security throughout Central Asia. Against this background, the OSCE has been actively preparing border management projects, particularly in Tajikistan. We hope to engage Afghanistan in these shared security initiatives.

Kazakhstan’s announcement of its candidature for the OSCE Chairmanship has been welcomed by the Organization for very good reasons: It is the first from a former Soviet Republic and also the first from a Central Asian State. This opens up tremendous opportunities for Kazakhstan, for Central Asia, and for the OSCE as a whole.

There is still no consensus regarding the date of Kazakhstan’s Chairmanship. The OSCE will continue to work closely with the country, and will further assist it in its reform process. Under its Chairmanship, Spain has been actively involved in reaching a consensus among all the OSCE States on this important decision.



Chisinau, 8 October. President Vladimir Voronin of Moldova and the OSCE Chairman-in-Office exchange views.

In this *tour d'horizon* of the OSCE, I feel obliged to mention the issue of military security in its most conventional sense — that is, matters concerning arms control and the disarmament regime that supports security in the transatlantic and Eurasian regions.

The Spanish Chairmanship notes with deep concern the ongoing stalemate regarding the future implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. This Treaty has served as a cornerstone of European security since 1990, and it is imperative that we not allow hard-won gains to be lost.

The Chairmanship is calling upon all States Parties to renew their efforts to display the necessary flexibility towards finding a solution to the deadlock in a spirit of trust, transparency and mutual co-operation. The Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid at the end of November will be an opportune time to move the process forward, with Spain as an active contributor.

COUNTER-TERRORISM

At the helm of the OSCE, Spain has been acting on this array of challenges in a balanced and concrete manner. We have assigned top priority to counter-terrorism, working effectively to support United Nations-led counter-terrorism work, including implementation of the wide-ranging UN Security Council Resolution 1373 and the international legal framework for combating terrorism. In 2001, the OSCE States committed themselves to adhering to the 12 universal conventions and protocols related to terrorism. Today, 48 out of the 56 OSCE participating States are party to all 12 instruments.

This year, we organized four major conferences focusing on specific areas in countering terrorism: legal co-operation in criminal matters, public-private partnership in combating terrorism, travel document security, and assistance to victims of terrorism. In addition, expert workshops were held in October and November examining issues relating to incitement to terrorism and the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes.

The OSCE continues to collaborate with States in their efforts to implement international agreements and conventions, as well as to generate innovative forms of co-operation in key shared security concerns.

The Spanish Chairmanship has also championed the cause of economic and environmental security, with a particular focus on the threat posed by land degradation and water management. I am convinced that the OSCE can act as a platform for dialogue and a network for co-operation in these areas, since they figure prominently in the Organization's comprehensive concept of security.

This year, we have been strengthening the OSCE's human dimension. I believe that we have been making advances in promoting sound values among diverse and pluralistic societies — an issue intimately related to our commitment to deepen democracy in our participating States. Diversity is a fact of life in today's societies. Without respect for diversity, dialogue is useless. This thought should be uppermost in our minds as we move forward in the twenty-first century. The OSCE attaches great importance to the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations initiative as a positive instrument for managing and promoting good practices in areas concerning young people, education, migration and the media.

The OSCE has been making a substantive contribution towards the promotion of tolerance and non-discriminatory policies and practices. After all, the OSCE is itself an alliance of civilizations in action, even though we have to achieve consensus on proposals for action regarding the UN initiative.

The OSCE Chairmanship held a conference on the challenges of Islamophobia in Cordoba in October, in the context of the development of the human dimension. It reflected our conviction of the necessity to promote tolerance and non-discrimination in order to harmonize coexistence in all its dimensions. This event followed an OSCE conference on anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance, which took place in 2005, also in Cordoba.

GROWING AGENDA

The OSCE's "to-do" list is not shrinking, and is, in fact, growing as new challenges emerge. It is only natural that our agenda for the 2007 Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid is ambitious. During the run-up to the gathering, the Spanish Chairmanship will be actively seeking to forge consensus on vital decisions, including those aimed at strengthening environmental security, pluralistic societies, co-operation in counter-terrorism, and the fight against human trafficking.

Chairing the OSCE poses a tremendous challenge, since the Organization is a delicate political instrument with a unique character and historical evolution. The task involves managing existing tensions in the OSCE area and the threats to its progress and security. For this reason, leading the Organization calls for a passionate commitment to the responsibility for ensuring that 56 States are united around a shared vision: that of a Europe that is free and at peace.

This article is based on the address of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos, to the sixty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly on 28 September 2007.