

# The 2010 review conference: tooling the questions

by Marc Perrin de Brichambaut



The OSCE Review Conference begins in Warsaw, 30 September 2010. Left to right: OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, Deputy Director for Conference Services Hans-Michael Plut, Kazakh Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Special Envoy of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Kazakhstan's Deputy Foreign Minister Konstantin Zhigalov. (Piotr Markowski)

When participating States decided this autumn to convene a Summit in Astana on 1 and 2 December, they also set the venue and dates for a review conference in three parts: in Warsaw from 30 September to 8 October, in Vienna from 18 to 26 October and in Astana from 26 to 28 November. For 17 days in total, they are meeting to identify problems, assess progress and find ways ahead in all three of the OSCE security dimensions: politico-military, economic and environmental and human.

The review conference is an opportunity for participating States to put on the table the commitments they have taken and confront them with the reality of developments on the ground. It is a chance to look squarely at issues where more work is required: the principles of the *Helsinki Final Act* and OSCE commitments are not being fully implemented; the use of force has not ceased to be considered an option for settling disputes; the *CFE Treaty* remains suspended; protracted conflicts remain unresolved. It is also a time for pulling together to confront new problems: the trans-national threats of terrorism and organized crime, cyber-security, climate change and the economic crisis all require a concerted response. It is a time to unite in a new resolve to bring the post-Cold War era to a close and shape an undivided security space encompassing the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region.

Review is, of course, an ongoing activity of the OSCE. Every week, participating States make use of the opportunity to remind each other of their duties and to report on progress or lack of it. But a review conference is more. It means surveying the whole range of topics on which participating States have agreed to co-operate, and assessing performance across the board, with the clear goal of determining what can be refined and where we can do more.

The review conference in the form it is held today goes back to a decision taken by participating States at the 1992 Helsinki Summit. The success of that Summit, at which many of today's institutional structures were established, had been assured by a thoroughgoing implementation debate in the months leading up to it. The Helsinki Follow-up Conference, as it was called,

benefited from the CSCE States' post-Cold War affirmation of common values. In a clear departure from the more trying Follow-up Conferences that reviewed implementation of the *Helsinki Final Act* in the 1970s and 1980s, this review exercise was pragmatic and forward looking.

In Helsinki, the participating States clearly stipulated that every OSCE meeting of Heads of State or Government would henceforth be preceded by a review conference. And they set out clear terms of reference: the conference would review the entire range of activities, as a whole and in detail, and would prepare a decision-oriented document to be adopted at the Summit meeting.

The review conference we are holding now benefits from optimal conditions for being a truly thorough evaluation of where we stand. Over the past two years, the Corfu Process, chaired by the Greek and Kazakh Chairmanships respectively, has been an occasion for intensive brainstorming on the future role of the OSCE and other actors in ensuring Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security. This summer, when the foreign ministers met in Almaty on the invitation of Chairperson-in-Office, Kazakhstan's Secretary of State and Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev, they decided that the matters raised in the Corfu Process held so far warranted the holding of a Summit.

Now is the time to set our own house in order, to take stock, see where repairs are needed and where there is room for improvement. It is a time for stringent examination and for tooling problems and questions into constructive solutions. It will not and should not be easy. But the attention and energy that is invested in the three sessions of the 2010 review conference will have a direct bearing on the quality and the future impact of the Action Plan which it will be the task of our Heads of State or Government to draw up at the 2010 OSCE Summit in Astana.

Marc Perrin de Brichambaut is Secretary General of the OSCE.