

**“Promoting lasting solutions –
Approaches to conflict resolution in the OSCE area”**

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Introductory Remarks

*by Ambassador Lamberto Zannier
Secretary General of the OSCE*

Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am glad to welcome you to the fourth Security Days event this year. The purpose of the Security Days initiative is to widen the debate and bring in fresh ideas on important security issues. The focus of today’s conference will be on approaches to conflict resolution in the OSCE area and I would like to warmly welcome our keynote speaker as well as the panellists and moderators. This event gathers a number of distinguished participants, who are all well-equipped with knowledge and first-hand expertise on a variety of specific issues related to conflict resolution. Therefore, I look forward to hearing their views and learn from their rich experiences.

I am certain that the remarks of our distinguished keynote speaker, Professor William Zartman, as well as the presentations of our renowned panellists will set the stage for lively and thought-provoking discussions, including equally insightful contributions from the floor.

During discussions on the implementation of Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/11 on the conflict cycle, participating States have argued that not all elements of the conflict cycle have

been addressed at the same level of detail and have in particular requested that more attention be paid to conflict resolution and enhanced co-operation with track-two initiatives. Moreover, various statements made during this year's Annual Security Review Conference pointed to the OSCE's role in conflict resolution and called for increased efforts of the Organization, in particular with a view to the settlement of existing protracted conflicts. Today's conference is intended to address these concerns.

The event today is intended not only to take stock of where we stand with our current toolbox on conflict resolution, but also to explore possible new tools and methods at conflict solving. Consequently, the results of this conference will provide important feedback and food for thought for future discussions among participating States, taking place, *inter alia*, in the informal working groups within the framework of the Helsinki + 40 Process.

Every day, conflict resolution facilitation is carried out by a variety of OSCE actors. This includes, among others, the Institutions, field operations as well as units of the Secretariat, which engage in conflict resolution activities on regional, national and local levels across the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions.

It is indeed the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security and its wide-spread membership that are the cornerstone of the Organization's comparative advantage vis-à-vis other international stakeholders. Combined with the OSCE's specific consensual decision-making processes, the Organization has a strong mandate as well as a variety of mechanisms, instruments and tools that allow its representatives and officials to play a significant role in addressing conflicts throughout the OSCE area.

The OSCE has long been involved in mediation efforts. Some of these have been dragging on for a very long time – a situation that we cannot be satisfied with. These include, among others, efforts in seeking resolution to the conflict in and around Nagorno-Karabakh through the so-called Minsk Group, the "5+2" negotiations in relation to Transdniestria, and the Geneva Discussions on Georgia, where the OSCE co-operates with the UN and the EU. In these days, we are engaged in intense and complex efforts to prepare the facilitation of municipal elections in northern Kosovo and for voters in Serbia.

Less visible to the public, but equally important in terms of conflict resolution, are the OSCE's efforts at quiet diplomacy and facilitating dialogue at the local and national level – notably through the work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, which is critical to preventing or reducing tensions between groups, promoting tolerance and finding solutions for conflicts before they escalate or re-escalate into violence.

Verification and monitoring efforts by field operations, which, for instance, are carried out by international police officers, are an important OSCE contribution to peacekeeping, as are the efforts by mission members engaged in capacity-building in areas such as the rule of law, human rights, disarmament, democratization, and security sector reform. Much of this type of activity, which was central to the OSCE's efforts in South Eastern Europe in the 1990s, continues to be relevant today.

Allow me to make a few more general considerations to help us guide our discussions go beyond already well known national positions on specific protracted conflicts:

- Conflict resolution should be perceived as a multi-track process that relies on a wide range of methods and procedures aimed at peaceful and sustainable solutions to conflicting issues. Preparing a state and its people for peace, including through building bridges and overcoming deep-seated animosities, is as important as a ceasefire, interim or final peace agreements, all of which are essential contributions to conflict resolution. Still, they are to be seen as stepping stones along the path rather than the end of the process as such.
- Conflict resolution involves long-term political processes, including periods of slow to no progress punctuated by shifts in position, circumstances, or context. Third party actors involved in the conflict resolution facilitation should thus anticipate, identify and leverage windows of opportunity whenever progress can be made.
- To be effective and sustainable, approaches to conflict resolution must be comprehensive but at the same time tailored to the specific needs and strategic interests of the conflicting parties and all other stakeholders involved. Furthermore, conflict resolution will only be successful if it respects the principle of local ownership and is built on the political will and commitment of conflicting parties.

Without the strong determination by conflicting parties, no conflict resolution effort can be successful, no matter how effective and sophisticated the mediation applied.

- At the end of the day, sustainable peace building and long-term non-violent conflict resolution processes will be the more effective, the more they are based on the integration of government and civil-society approaches across regional, national, and local levels.

In light of these considerations, I look forward to hearing your views on some of the key issues of importance to us here in Vienna:

1. How can the OSCE increase its capacity to identify and leverage entry points for its efforts at conflict resolution and how can we further integrate gender-based approaches into conflict resolution?
2. How can the Organization enhance its contribution as regards the facilitation, monitoring and verification of peace agreements?
3. How can the OSCE capitalize on lessons learned from its past performance in civilian peacekeeping and how can the Organization increase its preparedness for participating in future multilateral peacekeeping operations?
4. How can we strengthen our contribution to sustainable peace building, for instance through the support for local and national conflict resolution mechanisms as part of so called infrastructures for peace?

A brief summary paper, outlining key recommendations from this Security Days event, will be made available to participants in the coming weeks. I am convinced that sound recommendations identified today can be highly useful for our discussions on the conflict cycle, including in the framework of the Helsinki + 40 Process. Lessons learned and best practices identified today may well feed into our debates on the establishment of a security community within the OSCE, and promote the Organization's capacities in all phases of the conflict cycle.

And now, I have the pleasure of handing over to our distinguished keynote speaker, Dr. William Zartman, Professor Emeritus at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, John Hopkins University. Professor Zartman, the floor is yours!