

**OSCE Annual Security Review Conference**  
**Opening Session**  
**Keynote Address by Eric Rubin**  
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**Vienna, June 26, 2012**

Mr. Chairman, I want to begin by expressing my appreciation to the Chairmanship of the OSCE for its energy and effort to expand the Annual Security Review Conference and enhance its value. The United States applauds your tireless work.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me to share the spotlight with this panel of distinguished, creative diplomats who have helped to make history here in the Hofburg Palace, like Alexander Grushko; in Brussels, like Helga Schmid; in Ankara, like Bulent Meric; and beyond, like our experienced Secretary General, Lamberto Zannier. The United States remains deeply committed to the ideals and vision of the OSCE, an organization whose broad geographic scope and membership – from Vancouver to Vladivostok – and its unique aqis, have given it standing to engage on sensitive issues within and among its Participating States, in situations where organizations like NATO and the EU (and maybe even governments like the United States or Russia) might not be equally welcome.

This conference allows us to review our efforts not only to strengthen security across the OSCE space, but also consider ways to extend the concept of comprehensive security to our Asian and Mediterranean Partners as well. To promote security within our region and beyond, we must redouble our efforts to improve the implementation of our core OSCE commitments. This conference offers us a unique opportunity to consider how we might deepen our engagement across all three dimensions of security: politico-military, economic and human.

Since I first stepped into OSCE's ambit in the 1980s -- when it was still a "conference" -- it has been transformed. In that regard, I would highlight the dramatic expansion of OSCE's partnerships beyond Europe, which in my view is a demonstration of our organization's credibility and expertise in critical areas, especially the human dimension. Looking at the substance of OSCE's work, the emphasis we witness today in the agenda for this conference, on what we label "transnational threats," is tangible evidence of the OSCE's ability to respond to new challenges and the readiness of its membership to work together on those hard problems.

We would welcome a revitalized spirit of cooperation in the military security area that has been a headline-maker for this organization throughout all of its existence: today the Cold War is long behind us and our military organizations are much smaller than 20 years ago, but we also have less transparency regarding the largest military forces in Europe. That is not the right direction, and I'm sure that will be discussed in the next days, including by my colleague Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Celeste Wallander.

Today I'd like to focus my remarks on OSCE's role as a "unique forum" for "preventing and settling conflicts" in Europe, as our Heads of State and Government affirmed at Astana. The OSCE is uniquely positioned to assist in all areas of the conflict cycle, including through early warning measures and prevention on the front end; management and resolution of existing conflicts; and rehabilitation in post-conflict areas. There have been many valuable lessons learned through OSCE's engagement in these areas, and we should consider them as we seek a way forward.

I'll focus my remarks on three areas, with a goal of advancing our conversation on the vital role of the OSCE in addressing the protracted conflicts and in situations of conflict and tension more broadly: 1) current activities in the conflict areas, including both our successes and failures; 2) lessons learned; 3) the way ahead.

### **Current Status**

As one of three Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group, the United States remains committed at the highest levels to assisting the sides of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to reach a lasting and peaceful settlement. Although such a settlement remains elusive, the Minsk Group has proven vital to preventing a return to war and to bringing the parties to the conflict closer to a negotiated peace. In January of this year, the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia issued a joint statement in Sochi that committed them to "accelerate" reaching agreement on the Basic Principles, as well as continuing work on humanitarian contacts and a mechanism to investigate incidents along the frontlines. The Co-Chairs have worked intensively to help the sides to implement the Sochi statement, including just last week in their joint meeting with the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Although the Minsk Group has made progress toward reaching agreement on a framework for a comprehensive settlement, important work remains. As the joint statement from Presidents Obama, Hollande and Putin noted on June 18, we have called upon the sides to demonstrate their political will by making the decisions that will allow a peaceful settlement based upon the Helsinki Final Act principles of non-use of force or threat of force, territorial integrity, and self-determination and equal rights of peoples.

The OSCE has a robust presence in Moldova, where the OSCE Mission to Moldova plays a significant day-to-day role in defusing tensions related to the Transnistrian conflict. As one of the mediators in the 5+2 talks, the OSCE deserves a significant share of credit for the resumption of the talks in late 2011. The OSCE has been in the forefront – working with the government of Moldova – in advocating for enhanced people to people contacts between the two sides, and joint work on common concerns, like transportation. I am happy to say that many of these initiatives have been positively received by the new authorities in the Transnistrian region. As a direct result of that work, there have been real improvements in the daily lives of people on both sides of the Dniester River. I would include among these, for example, the resumption of cargo rail service.

But we have a long road ahead. Internal checkpoints impede the free movement of goods and people and hinder the economic development that is imperative throughout the region. Foreign military forces – and a large munitions depot – remain on the territory of Moldova

without its consent. The shooting on January 1, 2012 of a Moldovan citizen by a member of the Russian peacekeeping forces at one of the internal checkpoints demonstrates the need to reevaluate the security arrangements currently in place. Progress is possible if all parties to the 5+2 are ready to engage constructively and develop new approaches. As an observer to the talks, I can assure you that the United States is ready to work with the EU and all the players to stimulate a dialogue that zeros-in at last on the core issues of a political settlement, even while we redouble our efforts to build confidence and change the facts on the ground so that trust, not suspicion, is the universal currency.

In Georgia, the OSCE's historically important role has been greatly diminished. While the OSCE participates in the Geneva discussions, where I regularly represent the United States, and co-chairs the Incident Prevention Response Mechanism (IPRM) for South Ossetia, this is an extremely limited role for the organization. This is a missed opportunity, in my view. Georgian authorities have made clear that they would welcome a renewed OSCE role in the region, including on conflict issues. It is more than unfortunate – it is unacceptable – that such a request from a participating State should not be met with a positive and creative response.

The IPRMs have provided the most concrete benefits of the Geneva process. They have enhanced stability on the ground and facilitated contacts. These meetings are a vital venue for exchanging information and defusing tensions. We regret that the IPRM for Abkhazia has been postponed, though fortunately the OSCE-chaired IPRM for South Ossetia continues to function smoothly. In our view, the IPRMs should be enhanced by broadening their agenda, to expand their range of cooperation to include criminal investigations and enable cross-boundary trade that can help improve the lives of those living in and near the conflict areas. There are a number of specific, concrete steps that could reduce tensions, increase transparency, and pave the way for contacts that can help lay the basis for a more positive future: for example, humanitarian access to the regions is woefully inadequate. Absent UN and OSCE missions, and absent access by the European Union Monitoring Mission, the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions have become gray areas closed off from the broader international community. No one gains. Everybody loses. This is not the right direction.

### **Lessons Learned**

Now to lessons that can help shape the way ahead: I would offer three, noting that they may apply differently to each of these conflicts, and to the OSCE's approach on conflicts more broadly.

First: if we view the conflicts overwhelmingly as military confrontations to be solved, we will not get far. Preparing populations for peace entails ensuring that human rights and fundamental freedoms are factored into our efforts at every phase of the conflict cycle. Humanitarian and people-to-people contacts can help to decrease tensions and build understanding, allowing peoples in their respective regions to view those on the other side as potential partners and neighbors. We need to view the way ahead as encompassing the

human, economic, and security aspects. The OSCE's comprehensive concept of security is tailor-made for this job.

Second: Words matter. President Saakashvili's public statement that Georgia would not use force to resolve the conflicts in his country sent a reassuring message to the people of the region and to the international community. It makes a difference when informal 5+2 talks are transformed, and official talks resume with a publicized agenda for business. Words can also do harm. The United States and its fellow Minsk Group Co-Chairs have called upon the sides to refrain from aggressive rhetoric, which only serves to prolong the conflict and does nothing to prepare populations for peace.

Third: Actions matter more. In Georgia, greater understanding and increased stability have resulted from gradual confidence-building and regular and predictable IPRM meetings. In situations like Moldova, when rail traffic flows and commerce and contacts are facilitated, tensions diminish. Predictably, we've learned as well – and in all cases -- that lack of information and contacts have their own insidious effect: for example, lack of shared information on military forces yields less security, less trust.

Now, one comment: it's my observation that when we allow the OSCE to play a role, the results it can deliver are superb. As an international organization with broad membership, the OSCE has the unique ability to facilitate ways ahead. The members of this organization should find the courage to deploy the OSCE to take an active role in preventing, responding to, mediating, or facilitating recovery from conflict. We, the members, need to think with renewed purpose about how we can better tap the OSCE's potential for facilitating an effective international response to conflict.

I want to mention in that context one example of what the OSCE can do when we allow it to use its vast experience in the field. The OSCE played a critical role in facilitating the recent elections in Kosovo. It was the only organization that had the standing and capacity to facilitate peaceful balloting, and in doing so it prevented the very real possibility of violence. The Conflict Prevention Centre, led by Ambassador Adam Kobieracki, provided the support necessary to facilitate negotiations on the OSCE's role in the elections, while the members of the OSCE mission to Kosovo contributed extensively to producing concepts for the way forward. They worked effectively with other international entities, including KFOR and EULEX. The OSCE was able to establish polling stations under an extremely tight timeline, with no serious security incidents. We should draw on this experience in order to further the OSCE's ability to address areas of potential conflict in a timely, effective manner.

### **Looking Ahead**

The way ahead will require significant creativity and political will from all of us. At Astana, we agreed that "increased efforts should be made to resolve existing conflicts in the OSCE area in a peaceful and negotiated manner, within agreed formats, fully respecting the norms and principles of international law enshrined in the United Nations Charter, as well as the Helsinki Final Act." In order to fulfill that commitment, it is clear that we must work hard to resolve not only the current conflicts, but to prevent future crises in those regions

and elsewhere. Events in Kyrgyzstan and Georgia demonstrated the limitations on OSCE's ability to respond promptly and effectively to situations of conflict in the OSCE area. Several participating States – including Russia and the United States, to name two -- have argued that the OSCE needs to be able to provide the international community swiftly, almost in real time, with impartial and comprehensive information regarding the situation on the ground as tensions develop. But there are a lot of different opinions on the methods the OSCE should use to do that.

Let us suggest this: the organization needs to be able to gather comprehensive information first hand; quickly convene to discuss the way ahead; and take appropriate action immediately. The members of this organization should decide that when an OSCE participating State agrees to welcome an OSCE observer mission on its territory in a situation of crisis, that request will be honored with an immediate and effective response – not a delay, not a veto. I am not an advocate of extended theoretical discussion of the sources of conflict. The protracted conflicts have been with us in Europe for decades; I am not sure that further analysis is what is needed. What we need now is the political will collectively to use this organization to change the future: our Chairman in Office has suggested that we begin to consider our message for the 2015 landmark: Helsinki plus 40. We agree. But we do not need to reconsider our principles and our goals. We need, however, to look with courage and vision at the tools we have given this organization to respond to security challenges in our region. Standing still is not an option. Either we will move ahead – and we have seen that this is possible – or we will fall behind. While the rest of us may be able to live our lives without paying them too much attention, for the people who live in regions of crisis and conflict, observance of the Helsinki Principles is not a reality. Changing that fact is our challenge and our responsibility.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.