



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Conflict Cycle Seminar

**“The contribution of Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R)
to Conflict Prevention”**

Vienna, 13 May 2019

Keynote Address

Secretary General Thomas Greminger

Thank you, State Secretary Parížek, dear Lukáš,
Assistant Secretary-General Zouev, dear Alexander,
Dear Greta,
Ambassadors, Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning. I am delighted to join State Secretary Parížek in welcoming you to today's event.

Devoting this year's Conflict Cycle Seminar to Security Sector Reform and Governance was a wise choice. Discussing SSG/R processes with a view to their role in the the different phases of the conflict cycle will help us better understand the relevance of this concept to the OSCE's work. So I thank the Slovak Chairmanship for advancing the discussion on SSG/R in the OSCE context, and the CPC for its continuous efforts to strengthen the conflict cycle toolbox.

Dear colleagues,

Let me be very frank. I am well aware of the different, and sometimes diverging, views among participating States on OSCE involvement in SSG/R. And –to tell you the truth- it sometimes reminds of the discussion we had in 2011 when we were about to strengthen the OSCE conflict cycle toolbox. As you know, we did so successfully after long and profound discussions. And what worked back then, I hope, will work as well this time, i.e we took the concerns of the sceptics seriously and built them into our approach to the conflict cycle.

So, I want to stress that our approach to SSG/R not only fully respects, but also demands, national ownership of the process. Implementation in line with national priorities is a precondition for the success of any possible OSCE assistance.

To put it bluntly: Security sector reform processes are, by definition, nationally-led and the OSCE's assistance is therefore demand-driven.

Having said that, SSG/R is already very present in our everyday work. It is closely related to all three dimensions of security, so it is an integral part of the Organization's comprehensive approach.

The OSCE has a long track record of supporting participating States in strengthening the governance of their security sectors in line with OSCE commitments. While not always labelled as such, most Executive Structures and the Parliamentary Assembly are actively involved in SSG/R support.

From a conflict cycle perspective, we know that enhancing crisis resilience and addressing root causes of conflict require long-term engagement. This is also very much in line with the UN Sustainable Development Agenda, particularly SDG 16 – building peaceful and inclusive societies. So a more focused approach to SSG/R would contribute to more effective implementation of relevant OSCE commitments.

We also need to understand that the security needs of men and women, as well as elderly and young people, are often different, so they need tailored approaches. The active contribution of both women and men is a prerequisite for successful development and implementation of SSG/R processes.

Dear colleagues,

On 20 March I presented my report on SSG/R in a joint FSC/PC session. The report made recommendations on what an OSCE approach to SSG/R should entail to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of our interventions.

I firmly believe that placing greater emphasis on good governance, strengthening cross-dimensional co-operation, making more efficient use of limited resources, and promoting closer co-ordination with other actors in the field would greatly contribute to building sustainable peace and security.

Strengthening partnerships at the regional and global level is also essential, as SDG 17 clearly outlines. We need to ensure co-ordinated action between OSCE structures, participating States, our Partners for Co-operation, and partner organizations.

Our longstanding partnership with the SSR Unit of the UN Department of Peace Operations, as well as our good co-operation with UNODC and UNDP, are excellent examples. The EU

is another key partner. A structured, working-level dialogue between the Secretariat's Conflict Prevention Center and the European External Action Service enables fruitful expert discussions on a regular basis.

I thank all colleagues from our partner organizations as well as think tanks, research institutes and civil society organizations for being here and contributing to our discussions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I referred to the importance of the security sector to ensuring sustainable peace and security. Therefore, it is useful to explore its role in the different phases of the conflict cycle as defined in Ministerial Council Decision 3/11.

Experience shows that SSG/R plays an essential role in all phases of the conflict cycle: early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and resolution, post-conflict rehabilitation, and peacebuilding.

Later today, we will have dedicated working sessions on the different phases of the conflict cycle, but let me share some initial thoughts on each of them.

First, **early warning**.

Violent conflicts around the world have in hindsight been linked to structural deficiencies in the security sector. Yet, in many cases, these shortcomings and the related potential for escalation continue to go unaddressed.

Grievances related to a lack of compliance with international human rights standards, or inadequate democratic oversight and good governance of the security sector, are early warning signals that should be taken seriously. The same is true when important areas of the security sector are ineffective and threaten the safety and security of our citizens.

Second, **conflict prevention**.

An effective, accountable and democratically controlled security sector enhances the crisis resilience of countries and enables them to cope with different security challenges. Only an accountable security sector that respects the rule of law and human rights will gain the trust of the local population and be able to respond effectively to their security needs.

The OSCE is already working in this area.

In Tajikistan, for instance, the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe promotes community policing and has also supported the establishment of model police stations, gender-sensitive police units, and an electronic crime registration system.

And the OSCE Presence in Albania assists the work of local safety councils, encouraging citizens and local authorities to work together, increasing public trust in police and local law enforcement.

Next, **crisis management and conflict resolution**.

Effective crisis management benefits from a well-functioning security sector. In addition, the security sector often plays an essential role in conflict resolution efforts, including negotiation of peace agreements. By contrast, a security sector that is poorly managed and not sufficiently accountable has the potential to destabilize an already fragile situation and open the door to escalation.

Finally, **Post-conflict rehabilitation and peacebuilding**.

SSR/G processes are crucial for rebuilding lasting peace and security in conflict-affected societies. In particular, long-term capacity building and institution building that reinforce the rule of law and democratic governance are critical.

Civilian management and democratic oversight are central elements here. This includes promoting parliamentary oversight, for instance by supporting legislation drafting processes. Several OSCE field operations engage with parliamentary security sector oversight committees and ombudsperson institutions. Obviously, also strengthening the effectiveness of the security sector is key if we want to improve the human security of our citizens.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, let me underscore three main points:

First, SSG/R is fundamentally a national process, and OSCE activities in this area are implemented with full respect for national sovereignty and local ownership.

Second, it is clearly useful to further integrate our SSG/R efforts into the OSCE's conflict cycle toolbox because it is such a crucial feature for consolidating security, peace and stability.

And third, good co-ordination between OSCE structures and participating States, as well as with our Partners for Co-operation and partner organizations, is key for the success of SSG/R processes.

But now it is time for our distinguished panellists, and all participants, to contribute to the discussion.

I am especially pleased that Assistant Secretary-General Zouev is here, and I look forward to learning more about the UN Department of Peace Operations' approach to SSG/R.

And I am very grateful to my colleagues from ODIHR, the OSCE Mission to Moldova, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE Secretariat for sharing their views with us today.

This event is an important contribution to our discussions on how to strengthen our capacities to address the different phases of the conflict cycle. In the same vein, it will support our work towards a more systemic and structured approach to SSG/R in the context of sustainable peace and security.

So I would like to encourage delegates and experts from capitals to take an active part in the parallel working sessions.

Thank you.