



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Conflict Prevention Centre

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OSCE and Conflict Prevention: The role of Field Presences

Introduction

I would like to slightly expand the theme of my presentation by addressing the broader subject of the OSCE approach to conflict prevention and, in this context, focus more specifically on the role of our field presences.

In fact, for us in the OSCE conflict prevention begins in this very building. The permanent dialogue among delegations both in the Permanent Council and in the Forum for Security Cooperation allows for a continuing exchange of views on all issues of concern to our participating States. The establishment of consensus rule as the only basis for the decision making process, even though it made this process more burdensome and sometimes frustrating, has encouraged full participation and indeed a strong sense of ownership of the organisation for all, and especially for the smaller countries.

OSCE Conflict Prevention is based on the organisation's comprehensive approach of security, which brings together activities specifically devoted to enhancing security in the politico-military dimension (through, i.e. a sophisticated network of CSBMs, arms control measures, both on a regional and a sub-regional regional scale, the implementation of provisions concerning SALW and the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Matters which are amongst the most advanced worldwide) with initiatives in the economic and environmental dimension, the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the strengthening of democratic institutions, the rule of law. More cross-dimensional activities, such as with respect to policing, trafficking, fight against terrorism or border management, have become concrete examples of how such comprehensive approach can be translated into practical activities engaging at the same time different institutions, each from its own angle and with its own contribution of expertise.

In the early 1990s, and especially in view of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, it became clear that the apparatus at the disposal of the CSCE for preventing and resolving conflicts was in need of adaptation and enhancement. The Budapest Summit in 1994 cast the OSCE as "a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention and crisis management" with a "flexible and dynamic" approach. New mechanisms, procedures and political instruments were established to facilitate this role. The emphasis shifted from mechanisms of early warning and prevention of inter-state conflict, mainly based on politico-military instruments, to an increasing attention to the factors that generate conflicts within and between states. This shift also meant an attempt to respond more flexibly but also more effectively to conflicts. To

this end “second generation” instruments, such as the HCNM and the missions of long duration were created. The Missions/field presences are new forms of international intervention into potential conflict situations. These missions, which in all cases are deployed with the approval of the host country, ensure that the OSCE community is kept informed of developments in its various areas and facilitate political processes designed to prevent or settle conflicts, and to assist with post-conflict rehabilitation.

OSCE missions and field activities – there’s some 19 of them now in operation, including the PRs on Estonia and N-K - are the front line of the OSCE’s work. They give the Organization an active presence in countries that require assistance and are the vehicle through which political decisions are translated into action. The mandates, composition and operation of missions and other field activities are increasingly varied, underlining the flexibility of this instrument. The respective mandate may, *inter alia*, include the following responsibilities:

- Providing assistance and advice or formulating recommendations in areas agreed by the OSCE and the host country;
- Observing compliance with OSCE commitments and providing advice or recommendations for improved compliance;
- Assisting in the organization and monitoring of elections;
- Providing support for the primacy of law and democratic institutions and for the maintenance and restoration of law and order;
- Helping to create conditions for negotiation or other measures that could facilitate the peaceful settlement of conflicts;
- Monitoring, verifying and assisting in fulfilling agreements on the peaceful settlement of conflicts;
- Providing support in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of various aspects of society.

It is clear that all Missions are engaged in some activities that have a preventive function. This is revealed from the perspective of two issues that are pertinent to conflict prevention: the promotion of dialogue and engagement in human dimension issues: 1) The human dimension issues are included in all mandates with a mention to issues of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and explicit references to developing the capacities of societies to regulate their own dysfunction through democratization, adherence to the rule of law and other appropriate measures. 2) The promotion of dialogue and understanding between parties features in the mandates of many of the Missions often linked to the task to gather or disseminate information.

This last element is a key premise to understand the role of Missions and their intended contribution to OSCE conflict prevention and early warning. Indeed, one of the Missions’ primary tasks is to maintain or promote transparency by gathering and disseminating accurate information for the political bodies of the OSCE. Reliable and timely information provides the basis upon which the political bodies and the participating States can act in a given situation. By being located in a country, Missions are or should be able to provide more dedicated information than most individual states receive from their embassies. Therefore, the key to the operational effectiveness of the Missions is their capacity to establish and maintain good and varied contacts with all parties and groups, as a basis for understanding

Missions should also be able to play instrumental roles in laying the groundwork for negotiation and conflict resolution processes, that is to play a facilitative and mediatory role.

In the context of conflict prevention Missions can facilitate relations between the parties by changing parties' perceptions and reducing fears, exploring options for settlement and helping governments to set up legislative and regulatory frameworks.

I wish now to provide a few examples of how missions concretely operate on the ground.

An example of conflict prevention activities in Georgia

In Georgia, the OSCE is deeply involved in conflict prevention activities, such as promotion of peaceful settlements of disputes, border monitoring, various projects on small arms and other weapons, and activities to address human, social, economic and environmental impact of security-related developments.

While promoting a peaceful resolution of Georgian-Abkhaz (where the UN are, however, in the lead) and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts, the OSCE is paying a lot of attention to activities aimed at preventing re-occurrence of open hostilities.

The work of the OSCE Mission to Georgia in relation to Georgian-Ossetian conflict could illustrate best such a role of the OSCE. The Mission tries to apply a comprehensive approach to the activities aimed at the resolution of the conflict, both in terms of simultaneously addressing issues belonging to all three dimensions of the OSCE, and in relation to its interaction with the authorities, civil society and the representatives of international organisations.

Naturally, the OSCE's involvement in the region started at a political level. The Mission has been promoting for a long time improvements of the existing mechanisms for political negotiations. Promotion of CBMs, including the monitoring of the activities of the peacekeeping force, was also of primary importance. Later on, economic issues came to the forefront of Mission's activities, since the reconstruction of the areas affected by the conflict was seen as one of the factors which could stimulate the peaceful resolution of the conflict. Finally, the human dimension issues are now becoming increasingly important for creating a favourable climate for a peaceful settlement.

This has proven to be a very efficient way to tackle the conflict and the results achieved so far could be described as highly encouraging. Despite the very difficult geo-political and economic situation of the entire Caucasus, at the grass-root level the conflict has been practically settled. The ever increasing contacts between the two communities and frequent meetings and co-operation at various levels between the officials representing both sides are among the best guarantees against reoccurrence of the military hostilities.

Another example of the OSCE's involvement in conflict prevention activities is the Border Monitoring Operation (BMO). Its role is to monitor and report on movement across the border between Georgia and the Chechen, the Ingush and the Dagestan Republics of the Russian Federation. Deployment and subsequent geographical expansion of this operation illustrate the ability of the Organisation to react immediately and adequately to requests of participating States to launch a conflict prevention activity in view of negative security developments. Despite a very difficult periods in the activities of the BMO over the last three years, this operation proved to be an important element contributing to confidence-building and promotion of stability in the region.

Finally, the Mission is addressing human dimension, social, economic and environmental aspects of security-related developments in Georgia. For instance, assistance is provided to the government and the population in preventing possible negative developments as a result of agreed withdrawal of the Russian military bases from Georgia. The Mission is also very active in helping Georgia to dispose off a large stocks of ammunition, bombs and other military material left at former military bases. Such material, if taken over by unauthorised groups, could have serious consequences for stability within the borders of Georgia and beyond.

Evolving activities in conflict prevention: the Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje

The Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje was established in 1992 when the International Community decided to extend monitoring activities to countries bordering Serbia and Montenegro. The function of the mission was to monitor developments along the border and to try and avoid any spread of tension from neighbouring countries into the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

As external threats at its borders eased, the small mission turned its attention to helping to resolve problems – most notably inter-ethnic– within the country itself. Between the mid and late 1990s, it played an important part in some key developments. In 1994 it assisted with a Council of Europe sponsored political census; in 1995, along with the High Commissioner on National Minorities, it helped defuse ethnic tensions surrounding the creation of a private Albanian language University in Tetovo and in 1998, the mission assisted the Government and ODIHR to create a new electoral law body.

But after the relative calm of the 1990s, the country was pitched into a major conflict in 2001 when armed rebels from the Albanian ethnic minority rose up against the Macedonian security forces. The seven month conflict ended in August 2001 with the internationally brokered Ohrid Framework Agreement, which granted enhanced rights to the country's ethnic minorities. The OSCE mission was tasked with the job of helping the government create the right conditions for the agreement to be implemented. Within a few weeks the mission grew from just a handful of members to over 400 national and international staff.

Immediately after the conflict, the primary goal of the Mission was to create a stable environment in former rebel held areas so as to allow the return of the Macedonian security forces. This involved painstaking negotiations often lasting many months, in occasionally volatile circumstances. But with willingness on both sides and ratification of an “Amnesty Law”, routine police patrols were re-established in all areas by June of 2002.

The Mission, with a network of initially six field stations in the former crises regions, offered confidence building as well as technical assistance in response to the requirements of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

Working closely with the Macedonian Ministry of Interior (MOI), the Mission is training a new generation of police officers whose inclusion in the security forces will help create a more ethnically balanced police force. By December 2003 it's envisaged that 1000 new cadets of the non-majority ethnic groups will have graduated from the MOI/OSCE training school outside Skopje. Additionally the Mission, with a substantial presence of international police advisors and community police trainers in the field, is helping to reform outdated

policing methods and develop “community policing”. In the former crises areas, this is seen as essential in order to re-establish trust between citizens and the security forces.

OSCE Confidence Building Monitors were tasked with monitoring the security in the former crises areas, maintaining close links with the communities, assisting with the return of internally displaced persons and helping to promote inter-ethnic co-operation. The Mission has developed an extensive network of citizen’s advice groups (CAGs) to foster better links between the security forces and the general public. Additionally the Mission provided technical assistance to municipalities in preparation for a greater degree of self-government in the future.

The Conflict Prevention Centre.

The Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) was created on 21 November 1990 at the Paris Summit of Heads of State or Government of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). It opened its doors as an independent office in Vienna on 18 March 1991, the first unit of the CSCE to be permanently based in the Austrian capital, providing the foundation of the eventual headquarters. When the CSCE Secretariat was moved from Prague to Vienna on 1 January 1994, the CPC was integrated into its structure. Today, the CPC is one of the main departments of the Secretariat of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), as the CSCE was renamed from 1 January 1995.

The CPC plays a key role in supporting the OSCE’s activities in the field, coordinating the activities of the Missions and assisting in the implementation of their mandates, and represents more a focal point in the Secretariat for coordinating and developing the OSCE’s role in the politico-military dimension. In particular, the Centre is responsible for supporting the Organization’s Chairman-in-Office (CiO) and the Secretary General in implementing OSCE tasks in the areas of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, post-conflict rehabilitation.

Among its day-to-day responsibilities are continuous liaison and follow-up with the OSCE missions or other field activities with respect to the execution of OSCE political decisions. Thus, it contributes to a coherent approach and a coordinated range of activities undertaken by the missions themselves or in conjunction with the various OSCE Institutions.

Under the guidance of the Secretary General, the CPC also supports the CiO and all relevant OSCE negotiating and decision-making bodies, such as the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation. More specifically in the politico-military and the broader security dimension of the Organization’s activities, the CPC provides support for the implementation of Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs), *inter alia* by maintaining databases on information exchanged, as well as maintaining a computer network specially designed to facilitate direct communication between capitals (the OSCE Communications Network). It supports and organizes seminars and workshops, and, at the request of participating States, it assists with the implementation of the 1994 Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, the Vienna Document 1999, the 2000 SALW Document, and other commitments. It also gathers data on relevant developments for the Organization and provides a constant means of contact for the OSCE personnel in the field.

The Conflict Prevention Centre is led by a Director, assisted by a Deputy Director and by a Planning and Co-ordination Officer.

Mission Programme Section

The Mission Programme Section provides a single point of managerial co-ordination within the Secretariat for all specific mission activity. It gives continuous support to the Chairmanship (CiO) concerning the field operations, while ensuring the OSCE Missions are informed about decisions and discussions of OSCE bodies under the political guidance of the Chair. It is also responsible for the processing of mission reports. The section is currently staffed by a Head, a team of Mission Programme Officers (MPOs) and a small secretariat. The MPOs are in continuous contact with the missions and field activities and communicate on a daily basis with the CiO. In addition, a Senior Security Co-ordinator defines the security and safety policy and standards for all OSCE field activities.

Project Coordination Cell

The capacity of the Conflict Prevention Centre to provide assistance to OSCE missions and other field operations in the area of project management has been strengthened in 2003 through the creation of a Project Co-ordination Cell (PCC), staffed by a Senior Project Management Co-ordination Officer assisted by interns on a rotating basis. The PCC's main tasks are to ensure the co-ordination of project-based activities within the CPC and to provide expert advice to OSCE missions and field operations during the planning, elaboration and implementation phases of substantive programmes and projects. The PCC works under the direct supervision of the Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre, in close co-operation with the other units of the CPC, in particular the Mission Programme Section.

Forum for Security Co-operation Support Unit

The primary task of this Unit is to provide support for the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), the OSCE decision-making body that deals with military aspects of security. The Forum's work focuses on the implementation of confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs), a package of information exchange and verification mechanisms elaborated in the Vienna Document 1999. The FSC Support Unit compiles databases of information exchanged by participating States as part of their commitments under the Vienna Document, as well as the other agreements of the FSC, notably the Code of Conduct on politico-military aspects of security and the Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). The Unit also maintains the OSCE Communications Network, which links capitals of participating States so that they can exchange information and implement CSBM regime in a timely fashion. Finally, the Unit develops projects in the security dimension, and provides support to OSCE field missions in this sphere in order to assist individual participating States in implementing their politico-military commitments. A recent example is a series of seminars and training workshops on the SALW Document and the Code of Conduct in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Operations Planning Unit

At the Istanbul Summit, it was decided, 'to set up an Operation Centre within the Conflict Prevention Centre with a small core staff, having expertise relevant for all kinds of OSCE operations, which can be expanded rapidly when required'. The Operations Planning Unit's primary function is to serve as a planning cell for future missions and field operations, and to identify potential crisis areas, by providing early warning. Within the Secretariat, the Operations Planning Unit works very closely with the Mission Programme Section, and is supported and assisted by the duty officers in the Situation/Communication Room. The Unit

also plays a key role in liaising with partner organizations, often in conjunction with the Secretary General's Office for External Affairs. The establishment of a Liaison Officer in the Operation Planning Unit ensures close working links at expert level, with both military and civilian partner organizations alike. The staff also includes a Border Issues Coordination Officer, a Resource Planner and a Political Analyst, and oversees the work of the Situation/Communication Room.

Situation/Communication Room

In the Situation/Communication Room, several duty officers work in shifts around the clock to guarantee constant contact with the missions and other field activities. The Situation/Communication Room acts as a flexible emergency management cell within the CPC, providing operational support for the Secretary General and OSCE's field activities, including assistance with the medical evacuation of field personnel. Apart from its emergency management capabilities, the staff observe the situation in the OSCE region continuously and gather data on relevant developments. This data is collated and prioritized, in collaboration with the Operations Planning Unit, and used to regularly update the Mission Programme Section and other OSCE staff.

Conclusion

In concluding my presentation, I would like to put forward a few brief suggestions for a possible follow-up to my presentation to our Mediterranean Partners.

The first would be to encourage you to visit us in the Secretariat and become better acquainted with our structures and the way we operate. We can organise meeting and briefing both individually and in groups and will be happy to spend some time with you to show you how we operate in respect to the various issues.

Next, I would like to remind you that there is a PC Decisions which allows Missions to receive representatives sent by partners for co-operation for short-term visits and authorises ODIHR to make arrangements for inclusion of observers sent by partners for co-operation in election monitoring or supervision operations organized by the OSCE, and will establish appropriate modalities for such participation. I would like to encourage you to take advantage of these provisions, since this would allow you to become more fully aware of the effectiveness and the value added of some of our field activities. In particular, the CPC will be ready to assist you in organising short term visits.

Lastly, we are open to contacts with any interested national, sub-regional or regional institutions operating with our mediterranean partners in the field of Conflict Prevention to facilitate an exchange of views and experiences and discuss lessons learned.