

Hands across the Danube in the drive against drugs and crime

The OSCE, as is often noted, is a “regional arrangement” of the United Nations under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, making it a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. The full significance of this, however, is not always clear. To illustrate how the arrangement works in practice for the benefit of international peace and regional security, it is worth taking a close look at the relationship between the OSCE Secretariat and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) — both based in Vienna.

BY WALTER KEMP AND STEPHANIE LIECHTENSTEIN

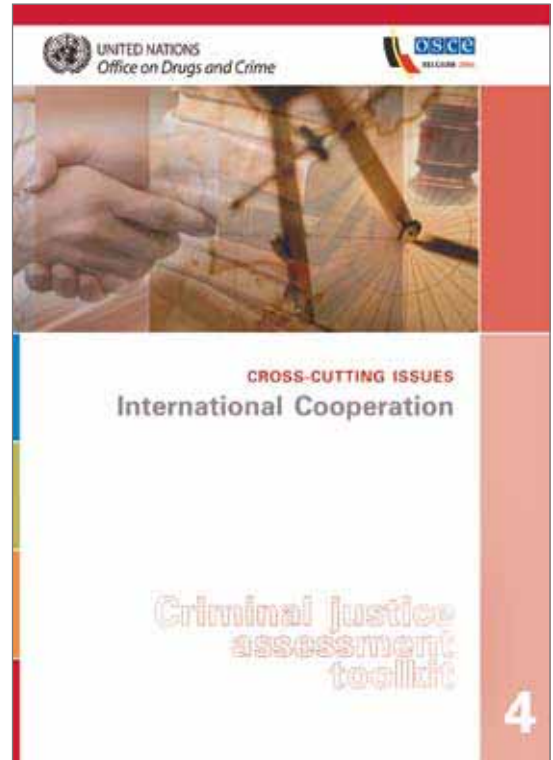
With drugs, crime and terrorism high on the global security agenda, the OSCE participating States are increasingly seeking technical assistance from international organizations and exploring ways to co-operate more closely among themselves. Transnational threats require multinational responses, and both the OSCE and UNODC are well positioned to provide support.

“When you look at the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century (2003), many of the salient issues fall within the mandate of

UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in December 2006.



BELGABENOIT DOPPAGNE



UNODC,” says OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut. And the fact that the UN Office in Vienna is just across the Danube makes co-operation easy. “We have good working level contacts and since many OSCE ambassadors are accredited to both organizations, they know the issues well. Co-operation is a perfect fit.”

ORGANIZED CRIME

The international community is trying to keep pace with the changing nature of threats to security by drawing up agreements that are relevant and responsive. For its part, UNODC brokered — and is now the custodian of — the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which came into force in 2003. Also known as the Palermo Convention, it is the most progressive international instrument ever designed to promote co-operation in preventing and combating transnational organized crime.

In 2005, the OSCE’s Ministerial Council meeting in Ljubljana urged participating States to sign and ratify the Palermo Convention. Follow-up action was urged by the 2006 Belgian Chairmanship, which had placed the threat posed by organized crime high on its list of priorities. Thanks to a joint UNODC-OSCE workshop organized in March 2006, the numbers have indeed gone up.

This is welcome news to UNODC, which has been seeking to improve law enforcement and mutual legal assistance through regional co-operation. “Organized crime



TURKISH NATIONAL POLICE

is a major threat to the OSCE area,” says UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa. “Criminals don’t respect borders, so we need to make the arm of the law longer so that law enforcement networks become more effective than criminal networks”.

ANTI-TRAFFICKING

The Palermo Convention’s Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children presents another ideal opportunity for UNODC and the OSCE to work together. Ratification of the Protocol by participating States figures prominently in the OSCE’s Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings.

To help States reach this goal, the OSCE’s Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, as well as field missions, provide them with assistance in amending and implementing legislation and in introducing effective anti-trafficking measures.

Mr. Costa hopes that OSCE participating States will join a new Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking and Modern-day Slavery, which will be the subject of an international conference in Vienna at the end of November.

Demand for legal and technical expertise is great as States try to keep up with the requirements of a whole new range of global measures against organized

crime, corruption and terrorism. Both UNODC and the OSCE have the capacity to offer States the assistance they sorely need to enable them to turn their good intentions into action. After all, ratification is only the first step. Implementation is key.

ACTION AGAINST TERRORISM

In action against terrorism alone, 13 universal instruments come into play. The OSCE’s Action Against Terrorism Unit (ATU) is working towards achieving a 100 per cent ratification rate among the OSCE participating States. The ATU, together with UNODC, is also helping States to enhance legal co-operation in the fight against crime, especially in matters related to counter-terrorism, such as extradition and mutual legal assistance.

To build national expertise, joint OSCE-UNODC workshops are held regularly for technical specialists, such as the one hosted for Central Asia and the Caucasus in February 2007. “These serve as an opportu-

Antalya, Turkey, 13-15 February 2007: Andrey Stytsenko (left), Programme Officer, Action against Terrorism Unit in the OSCE, and Walter Gehr, Project Co-ordinator, UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch, moderate a jointly organized regional workshop for Central Asia and the Caucasus.



OSCE/MIKHAL BUSTAREV

Eva BiauDET, OSCE’s Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, with Arturo Pérez Martínez, Deputy Head of the Spanish Mission to the OSCE.

nity to reinforce political commitments and pass on to States the skills they need for the implementation of concrete measures,” says Jean-Paul Laborde, Chief of UNODC’s Terrorism Prevention Branch.

MONEY LAUNDERING

The complementary efforts across the Danube extend to initiatives aimed against money laundering, financing of terrorism and corruption.

UNODC is the custodian of the UN Convention Against Corruption — the only global instrument of its kind — which entered into force in 2005. This year, the two organizations will publish an implementation guide on the Convention to help OSCE participating States design and carry out anti-corruption measures.

“Since crime and corruption deter domestic and foreign investment, we must help States to establish a sound business environment as an essential precondition for sustainable economic growth,” says Bernard Snoy, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.

OSCE field missions are doing their share to build skills and strengthen capacity. In Serbia, the OSCE Mission helped develop a central criminal intelligence system. In Kosovo, the OSCE and UN Missions conducted basic training on organized crime and financial investigation. And in Kazakhstan, the OSCE Centre has worked with authorities, the World Bank and UNODC to draft a law aimed at combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The OSCE and UNODC are also deepening their co-operation to improve the criminal justice system according to international norms and standards. At the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Brussels last December, both organizations, upon the initiative of the Belgian Chairmanship, launched an assessment toolkit designed to guide practitioners and government officials in identifying needs in policing, access to justice, custodial measures and other areas.

Is there scope for an even closer working relationship, for example in the field of drugs? “Any support that the OSCE can provide to contain the threat posed by Afghanistan’s opium is most welcome,” says Mr. Costa. “Improving capacity and regional co-operation among law enforcement agencies in Central Asia is one possibility.”

A first attempt in that direction was made when the OSCE and UNODC pooled their resources for an expert workshop on com-



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bating the threat of illicit drugs in October 2006. The OSCE is also one of 14 international partners of the Paris Pact Initiative (2003), which is designed to improve co-operation against illicit drug trafficking from Afghanistan.

Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut expects co-operation between the OSCE and UNODC to continue growing. “Drugs, crime and terrorism pose a real and present danger to all the participating States,” he says. “By working with UNODC, we can lighten their burden in the OSCE area and draw on their expertise; at the same time, they can rely on us to generate political will and assist in providing technical expertise.”

Echoing this sentiment, UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa adds: “Our co-operation with the OSCE could be a model for other regions in the world.”

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Afghanistan’s recent bumper crop of opium is currently one of the greatest threats to the OSCE region, according to the UNODC.

Vienna, 14 February 2007: OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut (left), here with Karl Wycoff, Head of the OSCE’s Action against Terrorism Unit, opens an annual tripartite meeting (OSCE, Council of Europe and the UN) which focused on counter-terrorism this year.



OSCE/MICHAEL BUSTAREY