



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Secretary General

Vienna, 26 June 2006

OSCE contribution to the Alliance of Civilizations initiative

Executive Summary

When the Foreign Ministers of the participating States of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) met in Ljubljana in December 2005 for their annual Ministerial Council, they resolved the Organization would contribute to the Alliance of Civilizations initiative by the end of June 2006.

The OSCE Secretary General, at the Ministers' request, drew on expertise in the OSCE's structures and institutions for this contribution, which aims to show the OSCE is well-placed to support the aims and goals of the initiative.

Indeed, as an organization of common norms, principles, commitments and values among equals, and an organization that spans three continents encompassing major world religions and cultures, the OSCE is itself already an alliance of civilizations in action.

The OSCE is the world's largest regional security organization, comprising 56 participating States. It has a comprehensive and co-operative approach to security, viewing it in three main dimensions: the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human. Decisions are based on consensus and are politically but not legally binding. The OSCE is a constantly evolving and important forum for dialogue on security in Europe - and beyond thanks to links with 11 Mediterranean and Asian Partner States and co-operation with other organizations.

The OSCE is a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its area. It addresses a broad range of issues, including arms control, confidence- and security-building measures, election observation, human rights, national minorities, democratization, policing strategies, counter-terrorism, and economic and environmental activities.

In the human dimension, the OSCE has a body of standards and commitments underpinned by the principles of the inherent dignity of the human being, human rights and fundamental freedoms – including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, belief and expression – as well as democracy and the rule of law, tolerance, the fight against discrimination and xenophobia, minority rights, multi-culturalism and integration. Those commitments set the framework in which people can live in true and lasting peace free from any threat to security. These values are the bedrock of the Organization. They aim to assert the need for a common security taking account of its human component.

In particular in recent years, the OSCE participating States have adopted a number of important decisions related to tolerance and non-discrimination, such as the 2002 Porto Ministerial Council's decision on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination (MC(10).DEC/6); the 2004 Permanent Council decisions on Tolerance and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination (PC.DEC/607) and Promoting Tolerance and Media Freedom on the Internet (PC.DEC/633) which were endorsed by the 2004 Sofia Ministerial Council decision on intolerance and non-discrimination (MC.DEC/12/04). Finally, in 2005 in Ljubljana, the Ministerial Council adopted a decision on Tolerance and Non Discrimination: Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding (MC.DEC/10/05).

Relevant OSCE commitments – the OSCE framework for promoting tolerance

Throughout the history of the OSCE and its forerunner until 1994, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), provisions for dialogue and co-operation, and commitments to democratic governance, tolerance and non-discrimination have been enshrined in all milestone documents, starting with the 1975 Helsinki Final Act.

Perhaps best known as an instrument of détente during the Cold War and an inspiration for civil society in the former communist bloc, the Act also underscored the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms which derive from the inherent dignity of the human being, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.

The Act also constitutes a milestone in the history of human rights protection. For the first time, human rights principles were included as an explicit and integral element of a regional security framework on the same basis as politico-military and economic issues, with no hierarchy among these principles.

OSCE's toolbox: structures, mechanisms and tools, including field operations and institutions.

The OSCE is primarily a collective body providing a permanent framework for political dialogue among its now 56 participating States, conducted with inclusiveness, equality and free exchange of views. It is also a forum for raising awareness among the participating States on their security concerns. It is a community of common norms, principles, commitments and values built on the principle of responsibility by individual States to implement OSCE commitments, as well as the principle of solidarity, whereby States assist each other on this task.

The Organization has developed a broad range of tools and institutions. This includes the Secretariat with its specialised units, acting in support of the OSCE's annually rotating Chairmanship. Secretariat units deal with economic and environmental matters, conflict prevention, confidence and security building, policing, gender, anti-trafficking in human beings and action against terrorism.

The Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities identifies and seeks early resolution of ethnic tensions. The High Commissioner has made recommendations on education, language, political participation, broadcasting in minority languages and policing of multi-ethnic societies, all based on the concept of integration with respect for diversity.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) deals with elections, human rights, the rule of law and democratization. ODIHR's mandate includes assisting participating States implement commitments on tolerance and non-discrimination

and supports efforts to respond to, and combat, hate crimes and incidents of racism, anti-Semitism, and other forms of intolerance, including against Muslims.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media observes media developments in OSCE participating States and advocates and promotes full compliance with OSCE principles and commitments on freedom of expression and free media.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has the primary task of enabling inter-parliamentary dialogue, an increasingly important aspect of the overall effort to meeting the challenges of democracy throughout the OSCE area. There has been a notable focus on tolerance and discrimination in recent years.

OSCE field operations are arguably the primary tool for promoting OSCE common norms, principles, commitments and values and assisting a given participating State in efforts to implement OSCE commitments. Mandates vary according to the circumstances and needs of the host state.

More recently, responding to a political call for increased OSCE activity in fighting all forms of intolerance and discrimination, three separate Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office have been appointed on combating different forms of intolerance and discrimination.

OSCE activities corresponding to priorities addressed by the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative

The OSCE has developed a number of targeted activities in all four priority areas identified by the Alliance of Civilizations High Level Group.

The OSCE shares an understanding of the importance to produce and disseminate educational materials that teach about diverse faiths and cultures. ODHIR is working on a project to provide a snapshot of how discrimination and tolerance are handled in education and then draw on best teaching practices.

With regard to media and communications, common grounds exist between the OSCE and the High Level Group on paying particular attention to responsible journalism, as well as the Internet as a major and often polarizing force.

The OSCE shares the belief youth must be fully engaged. Environmental topics can be a powerful catalyst in this area. Human rights education for young people is an area where the OSCE could provide an added value to the Alliance's initiatives. OSCE field operations particularly promote youth initiatives.

Finally, migration and integration have been at the top of the OSCE's agenda in 2005, leading to the recent launch of a handbook on migration aimed at providing a set of best practices. In accordance with the Ljubljana Ministerial decision on migration, the work on migration issues continues in all three dimensions and will be reported to the Brussels Ministerial Council.

Other OSCE activities relevant to the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative

There are other fields of activity to which the OSCE has devoted considerable resources that have a direct bearing on attempts at building an Alliance of Civilizations, which can be established through a variety of means. For example, human rights and democracy are the real antidotes to extremism, violence and intolerance.

Gender deserves particular attention. Women are frequently among the most vulnerable, in particular in conflicts, but they have proven to be more ready to bridge cultural, national and ethnic boundaries. In this context, the OSCE encourages women to participate fully and equally in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation.

Representative and multi-ethnic policing is also an important element, together with the role of law enforcement in preventing and combating hate crimes. ODIHR has a programme to help police respond better to such crimes and has also identified 400 NGOs working on tolerance and non-discrimination.

Moreover, issues related to promoting sustainable environmental development and protection, combating trafficking in human beings and others draw on a set of universally recognized values that can be powerful elements in uniting people from different groups. The OSCE believes that including the above considerations in the action plan to be elaborated by the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative, alongside the four priority areas, would contribute to the overall effectiveness of the plan and ultimately of the Initiative itself.

Conclusions and the way forward

The OSCE clearly shares much common ground with the Initiative and through its political debate and commitments, as well as its expert activities, has already contributed substantially to promoting the same goals and aims. Some of these activities and tools and mechanisms, provided the Alliance achieves the necessary consensus, could be replicated globally.

The OSCE will continue identifying further avenues and concrete proposals for promoting tolerance and non-discrimination.

The OSCE stands ready, within the limits of its consensus-based mandate and resources, to help implement relevant recommendations in the action plan to be presented to the UN General Assembly.

I. Introduction

On 6 December 2005, the Foreign Ministers of the participating States of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) adopted a decision on “Tolerance and Non-Discrimination: Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding” at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Ljubljana. With this decision, the participating States resolved to make an appropriate contribution to the “Alliance of Civilizations” initiative through the promotion of inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue and the advancement of mutual understanding and respect as well as human rights throughout the OSCE area. In this regard, the Secretary General of the OSCE was given the task, drawing on the expertise of the OSCE structures and institutions, in particular the ODIHR, to provide in co-operation with participating States an OSCE contribution to the “Alliance of Civilizations” initiative and to bring it to the attention of the Alliance of Civilizations High-Level Group by the end of June 2006.

This contribution aims at establishing that the OSCE is well-placed to support the aims and goals of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, insofar as a significant proportion of the Organization’s commitments and activities reveal a shared understanding with the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative in its stated goals of forging collective political will and mobilizing concerted action at the institutional and civil society levels to overcome prejudice, misperceptions and polarization, while also countering trends toward extremism by establishing a paradigm of mutual respect between civilizations and cultures.. Indeed, this contribution also aims at confirming that the OSCE, as an organization of common norms, principles, commitments and values among equals is in itself already an alliance of civilizations in action.

The OSCE is the world’s largest regional security organization, comprising a broad membership of 56 participating States, covering the region from Vancouver to Vladivostok. It is the only pan-European regional arrangement under the terms of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. The Organization has a unique comprehensive and co-operative approach to security, viewing it in three main dimensions: the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human. Its decision-making process is based on consensus; each participating State enjoys equal status. Decisions are politically but not legally binding. This makes the OSCE an important forum for political dialogue on security in Europe.

Over the years, the OSCE has become a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its area. It addresses a wide range of security-related matters, including arms control, confidence- and security-building measures, election observation, human rights, national minorities, democratization, policing strategies, counter-terrorism, and economic and environmental activities.

Since its inception as the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), following the adoption of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, it has pioneered a broad and practical approach to dialogue and co-operation on security, not only among its culturally and religiously heterogeneous participating States, but also with Mediterranean and, later, Asian Partner States.

In the human dimension, the 30-year-old mandate of the OSCE has resulted in a body of standards and commitments underpinned by the principles of the inherent dignity of the human being, human rights and fundamental freedoms – including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, belief and expression – as well as democracy and the rule of law,

tolerance, fight against racism, discrimination and xenophobia, minority rights, multiculturalism and integration. Those commitments set the framework in which people can live in true and lasting peace free from any threat to security. These values are the bedrock of the Organization. They aim to assert the need for a common security taking account of its human component.

The OSCE is constantly evolving and has a flexible approach that allows it to adapt quickly. Throughout its history, the OSCE has acted as a laboratory of ideas and relied on a close relationship with civil society. The OSCE helps build capacity in civil society while at the same time drawing on the important contribution of NGOs and representatives of civic organizations in elaborating its conceptual framework and commitments. Civil society has also helped raise public awareness of OSCE commitments.

From the beginning, the OSCE's history proves that democratic and stable societies, fully engaged with civil society and fully respecting human rights and the principles of the rule of law and accountable and transparent government are the best guarantee of peace and stability. They are also a powerful antidote to spreading extremism and intolerance.

An essential tenet of the OSCE has been the firm stance to agree upon a core set of common norms, principles, commitments and values corresponding to the basic needs of all human beings. There is no hierarchy among States in the OSCE, nor is there a hierarchy among cultures or faiths. Furthermore, the OSCE has repeatedly and determinedly rejected linking terrorism, radicalism and the recourse to violence with any particular ethnicity, culture or religion.

To assist participating States fulfil OSCE commitments in the three dimensions of security, the Organization has established a number of institutions, personal representatives on various topics - including tolerance - and field operations. In so doing, the OSCE has given itself the tools to take extensive and effective action at all levels, tackling important matters at the core of the OSCE's mandate, some of which are also directly relevant to the Alliance of Civilizations.

This all means the OSCE is fully equipped to take concerted action on all the priority areas highlighted by the High Level Group.

The OSCE missions, institutions and participating States have extensive experience in education, training and awareness-raising. Young people are a fertile ground for and source of new ideas and should remain a clear target of these programmes. The impact the media and, in particular, the Internet can have on young people and on the wider public can still be honed and the OSCE has already started work in this area. The potential of women as partners fully integrated in the political, social and economic life of all countries is yet to be fully realized. The way migrants are included and accepted in all aspects of a society's life is also central in ensuring their full participation and integration. Finally, and crucially, democratic values and human rights, including the values of tolerance and non-discrimination, are at the core of any initiative aiming to ensure mutual respect and understanding between representatives of different cultures, value systems and religions.

In addition to the dialogue among its 56 participating States, the OSCE has established special relations with 11 Partners for Co-operation, Mediterranean and Asian. Such relationship, which stems from the Helsinki Final Act, underscore that security in Europe is

linked with security in adjacent areas. Today, Partner States are involved in the work of the OSCE across all three dimensions of security, providing valuable cross-fertilization of ideas and practices in promoting an extended space of security that encompasses tolerance, non-discrimination, migration and integration. Partner States have also contributed to the elaboration of this paper. Further, at the 1999 Istanbul Summit, the OSCE Heads of States and Governments recognized the risks and challenges we face today cannot be met by a single State or organization. The OSCE has therefore increasingly taken steps to co-operate with other international, regional and sub-regional organizations and institutions. To the Istanbul commitment, the participating States added at their Bucharest and Maastricht Ministerial Meetings a call for broadening dialogue with regional organizations outside the OSCE area, such as with the African Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States.

II. Relevant OSCE commitments – the OSCE framework for promoting tolerance

Since the inception at Helsinki in 1975, the OSCE has developed a body of commitments in the politico-military, economic and environmental and human dimensions. Today this encompasses CSBMs, countering illicit trafficking in SALW and MANPADS, anti-terrorism, border management and security, democratic institution-building, human rights, gender equality, free and fair elections, freedom of expression and the media. Below is an outline of the main OSCE commitments in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination. The full text of relevant OSCE commitments related to tolerance and non-discrimination can be found in the publication “OSCE Human Dimension Commitments: Thematic Compilation”, issued by ODIHR on 19 September 2005. The publication is available online (http://www.osce.org/odihr/item_11_16237.html) and is being translated into Arabic.

a) The 1975 Helsinki Final Act

The 1975 Helsinki Final Act established the CSCE as a multilateral and inclusive forum for dialogue and negotiation in Europe. As such, it served as an instrument of détente during the Cold War, overcoming distrust and increasing confidence. The so-called Helsinki Decalogue enshrines a number of key commitments and fundamental principles governing the behaviour of States towards their citizens as well as towards each other: promoting mutual understanding and developing co-operation in all fields in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the UN. In the Act, the signatories further pledged to promote peace and defend the inherent dignity of the human being through mutual understanding and increased solidarity among peoples and States. They also underscored the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms which derive from the inherent dignity of the human being, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.

The founders of the CSCE/OSCE had foreseen that cultural exchanges, co-operation and promotion of an ever wider knowledge of others all contribute to better comprehension and a growth of confidence among peoples and thus promote a lasting understanding among States. In their view, developing such mutual relations would contribute to enriching each culture, while respecting the originality of each. It would also help reinforce an awareness of common values and help build a democratic and peaceful Europe.

Emphasizing the common interest of participating States and non-participating Mediterranean States in peace, justice and security, the Helsinki Final Act committed the CSCE to

maintaining and amplifying contacts and exchanges of views in the Mediterranean region with the purpose of increasing mutual confidence and contributing to peace.

b) Further OSCE commitments elaborated through the years

Throughout the history of the CSCE/OSCE, provisions for dialogue and co-operation, and commitments to democratic governance, tolerance and non-discrimination – in order to promote mutual understanding and harmony among cultures and religions – have been further enshrined in all OSCE milestone documents.

The **“Concluding document” of the 1986 Vienna meeting** emphasized the need to foster a climate of mutual tolerance and respect between believers of different communities, as well as between believers and non believers.

The OSCE was the first intergovernmental organization to recognize and address the particular problems of the Roma and Sinti in the context of condemning and combating totalitarianism, racial and ethnic hatred, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and discrimination, as well as persecution on religious and ideological grounds (art.40 of the **Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE**, June 1990). This was followed by the appointment within the ODIHR of a Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues (Budapest 1994). The Copenhagen initial, breakthrough document on all aspects of the human dimension has been amply elaborated by subsequent OSCE meetings, documents and decisions, leading, e.g., to the adoption by the participating States of the Action Plan for Improving the Situation of the Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area **at the 2003 Maastricht Ministerial Council (MC/DEC/3/2003)**.

In the 1990 **“Charter of Paris for a New Europe”**, the CSCE committed to bolstering a Europe source of peace, open to dialogue and to co-operation with other countries or international institutions. In the Charter, the participating States expressed their determination to combat all forms of xenophobia and discrimination.

The **1993 Rome Ministerial Council declaration on Aggressive Nationalism, Racism, Chauvinism, Xenophobia and Anti-Semitism** expressed deep concern at the growing manifestation of aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, which caused interstate and intra-state tensions. Ministers agreed the CSCE ought to play an important role in the efforts to counter such phenomena undermining international stability and worldwide efforts to place universal human rights on a firm foundation. Recalling their commitment to an active support for the equal rights of all individuals and for the protection of national minorities, they requested the ODIHR and the High Commissioner on National Minorities to address all aspects of these phenomena.

The **1994 Budapest Document “Towards a Genuine Partnership in a New Era”**, identified aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism as being among the main sources of crisis, loss of life and human misery, reflecting the failure to apply the CSCE commitments. In the **1999 Istanbul “Charter for European Security”**, participating States identified the need to build confidence among peoples and between States as a common challenge for the whole international community, and pledged their commitment to intensify efforts to prevent conflicts in the OSCE area, and when they occur to resolve them peacefully. It commits the OSCE to promote tolerance and to build pluralistic societies. Concerns were expressed about the media being misused to foment hatred.

c) Recent decisions bearing on tolerance, non-discrimination and the need for multicultural and interfaith dialogue

More recently, the importance of the fight against racism and discrimination, and the importance of multicultural and inter-faith dialogue have been an OSCE priority. A number of decisions have been taken reaffirming the OSCE's determination to implement commitments in this field.

The **2001 Bucharest Plan of Action for Combating terrorism** contained a paragraph identifying tolerance and multiculturalism among the preventive factors against terrorism. It also stipulated that participating States and the Secretariat would broaden dialogue with partners outside the OSCE area, such as the African Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States.

The **2002 OSCE Charter on Preventing and Combating terrorism** reiterated the struggle against terrorism was not a war against religions or people and that preventing discrimination and encouraging intercultural and inter-religious dialogue was essential to address conditions that may foster and sustain terrorism. Participating States acknowledged the role media can play in promoting tolerance and understanding among religions, beliefs, cultures and peoples. Furthermore, in the **2002 Porto Ministerial Council's decision on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination** (MC(10).DEC/6), the OSCE Ministers stressed the positive role of multicultural and inter-religious dialogue in creating better understanding among nations and peoples and undertook to foster such dialogue, encouraging both governments and civil society to take part in it. Participating States committed themselves to promoting tolerance and non-discrimination nationally, regionally and locally, as well as to countering prejudices and misrepresentation, particularly in the field of education, culture and information.

In **2003**, the OSCE participating States summarized their shared threat analysis in a single document: the **OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-first Century**. The strategy included practices related to discrimination and intolerance within a special category of threats rooted in ethnic and religious tensions, aggressive nationalism, chauvinism, xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, violent extremism, and lack of respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. Against this background, the Maastricht Ministerial Council decision on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination (MC.DEC/4/03) reaffirmed the importance of the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and condemned all discrimination and violence, including against any religious group or individual believers.

In **2004**, the OSCE Permanent Council adopted three decisions on **Combating Anti-Semitism** (PC.DEC/607), on **Tolerance and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination** (PC.DEC/621) and on **Promoting Tolerance and Media Freedom on the Internet** (PC.DEC/633), which were endorsed by the Sofia Ministerial Council decision on intolerance and non-discrimination (MC.DEC/12/04).

In December **2005** in Ljubljana, the Ministerial Council adopted a decision on **Tolerance and Non Discrimination: Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding** (MC.DEC/10/05) in which it reaffirmed its determination to implement existing commitments and recalled the importance of intercultural and inter-faith dialogue and partnerships aimed at tolerance, mutual respect and understanding. The decision also gave the OSCE Secretary General the task to prepare an OSCE contribution to the work of the

Alliance of Civilizations Initiative, and bring it to the attention of the AoC's High Level Group.

III. OSCE's toolbox: structures, mechanisms and tools, including field operations and institutions

The OSCE has developed a broad range of tools and institutions aimed at achieving the goals set forth by the participating States, including by assisting participating States in implementing CSCE/OSCE common norms, principles, commitments and values. These include the Secretariat with its specialised units, acting in support of the OSCE rotating Chairmanship, three specialized institutions – the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media – and 18 field operations. It also has an active Parliamentary Assembly and three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office on tolerance.

Since its inception, the OSCE has been primarily a collective body providing a permanent framework for political dialogue among its now 56 participating States. Such dialogue is conducted with inclusiveness, equality and free exchange of views in order to address the interests of all participating States and to identify areas for co-operation and compromise. As such, it is also a forum for raising awareness among the participating States on their security concerns, which may vary from settlement of conflicts to raising early warning on specific issues to conducting a review of existing and new threats to security. As a community of States, the OSCE has its participating States at its centre. It is a community of common norms, principles, commitments and values, which is also built on the principle of responsibility by individual States to implement OSCE commitments, as well as the principle of solidarity, whereby States assist each other on this task.

The regular dialogue conducted mainly, but not exclusively, in the context of the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation, is corroborated with more in-depth discussion at dedicated ad hoc meetings and conferences, which are aimed at providing a forum for discussion by participating State on specific issues affecting their collective security and possible solutions or action to be taken by the Organization. Such meetings and conferences also provide for a systematic inclusion of representative of other international organizations and of civil society. The series of conferences on racism and intolerance outlined later in this paper, of which Cordoba was the most recent, are examples of such activities. On the basis of these conferences, further OSCE commitments can eventually be elaborated by the Permanent or Ministerial Councils.

The OSCE Chairman/woman-in-Office (CiO) is vested with primary responsibility, on behalf of the Ministerial Council and the Permanent Council, for co-ordinating and consulting on, OSCE business. The CiO provides all OSCE institutions and field operations with the necessary political guidance. The CiO may, when dealing with a crisis or a conflict to ensure better co-ordination of participating States' efforts on specific areas, appoint personal representatives (see below on the mandate of the three personal representatives on tolerance).

The Secretary General acts as the representative of the CiO and supports him/her in all activities aimed at attaining the goals of the OSCE. The Secretary General's duties include ensuring the OSCE decisions are implemented; acting as the representative of the CiO and supporting him/her in all activities aimed at fulfilling the goals of the OSCE and, as chief

administrative officer, assisting the Permanent Council and being responsible to it for the efficient use of the Organization's resources, for proper implementation of the financial and staff regulations. He also acts as focal point for co-ordination and consultations among OSCE institutions. The Secretary General draws on the expertise and broad network of a number of specialised departments and units in the Secretariat dealing with economic and environmental issues, conflict prevention, confidence and security building, policing, anti-trafficking in human beings, action against terrorism, and gender issues in co-ordinating OSCE's activities in these areas.

The Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities was established in 1992 to identify and seek early resolution of ethnic tensions that might endanger peace, stability or friendly relations between OSCE participating States. The High Commissioner's task is to provide early warning and, as appropriate, early action on tensions involving national minority matters which have the potential to develop into a conflict. The HCNM will do so using the instrument of silent diplomacy, and acting in full independence, impartiality and confidentiality. To the HCNM, tasked to address tension between majority and minority or between ethnic groups inside a state, with the aim of conciliation, integration and respect for diversity, it is obvious that the differences between civilizations play out also inside a state or a region as different ethnic groups identify themselves with different civilizations. To help him to address tensions, the High Commissioner has developed a series of recommendations on such subjects as education, language, political participation, broadcasting in minority languages and policing of multi-ethnic societies, which are based on the broad concept of integration with respect for diversity. These recommendations directly address an important aspect of the Alliance of Civilisations, namely how to eliminate or reduce the tensions between groups in multi-ethnic states. Although the High Commissioner's recommendations have been developed mainly in the context of ethnic differences, they are no less relevant in situations where ethnic differences are compounded by religious and cultural differences. The recommendations and other activities of the HCNM thus frequently constitute concrete grassroots work in support of an alliance of civilizations.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is the specialized institution of the OSCE dealing with elections, human rights, and democratization. It was originally established in 1990 as the Office for Free Elections. The ODIHR's mandate stretches across the OSCE human dimension, and includes promoting democratic election processes; assisting OSCE participating States to implement their human dimension commitments; contributing to early warning and conflict prevention by monitoring how OSCE participating States are implementing human dimension commitments and assisting participating States in implementing their commitments on tolerance and non-discrimination and supports efforts to respond to, and combat, hate crimes and incidents of racism, anti-Semitism, and other forms of intolerance, including against Muslims.

In 2004, the ODIHR established a dedicated tolerance and non-discrimination programme. It provides support to participating States in implementing their OSCE commitments and in strengthening their efforts to respond to, and combat, hate crimes and violent manifestations of intolerance. The programme also aims to strengthen civil society's capacity to respond to hate-motivated crimes and incidents. The ODIHR's activities are focused on the following areas: legislative assistance; law-enforcement training; monitoring, reporting on, and following up on, responses to hate-motivated crimes and incidents; as well as educational activities to promote tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding.

An advisory panel of experts on freedom of religion and belief was also established, under the auspices of the ODIHR. The panel comprises approximately 60 members and acts as an advisory and consultative body on issues that include education and training on international standards pertaining to freedom of religion or belief, inter-faith dialogue and conflict prevention, resolution and management.

Since December 1994, the ODIHR is also hosting the OSCE Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, whose mandate includes promoting fundamental human rights, including civil and political rights, in relation to the Roma and Sinti communities in the OSCE region.

The post of OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media was established in 1997 by the Permanent Council, following a recommendation made at the 1996 Lisbon Summit. The Representative's main mandate is to observe relevant media developments in OSCE participating States and to advocate and promote full compliance with OSCE principles and commitments on freedom of expression and free media. In this respect, the Representative assumes an early-warning function and concentrates on rapid response when participating States seriously fail to comply with OSCE principles and commitments. In line with his mandate, the Representative will not communicate with any person or organization which practises or publicly condones terrorism or violence.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was established by the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe and formally organized in Madrid in 1991 by the leaders of the Parliaments of all participating States. The Assembly's primary task is to facilitate inter-parliamentary dialogue, an increasingly important aspect of the overall effort to meeting the challenges of democracy throughout the OSCE area. The OSCE PA provides a vital link between the governmental side of the OSCE and parliamentarians from the OSCE countries. Through regular meetings of the Assembly, special parliamentary teams and missions, and political leadership in observing elections, the OSCE PA works to develop and promote mechanisms to prevent and resolve conflicts and contributes to developing democracy in the region. The Parliamentary Assembly provides a regular exchange of ideas, best practices and concerns between elected officials of all of the OSCE states.

OSCE field operations are the primary tool for promoting OSCE common norms, principles, commitments and values and assisting the participating States in their implementation. Their work addresses all phases of the conflict cycle: early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. Their mandates vary according to the specific circumstances and the needs of the host state. Mandates tend to follow the OSCE's three-dimension concept of security, and may include, *inter alia*, providing assistance to the host country in its efforts at strengthening democratic institutions, the rule of law, capacity building, developing civil society, disposing of surplus arms and ammunitions, etc. The OSCE has Missions or other field activities in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia and Montenegro, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

More recently, responding to a political call for increased OSCE activity in fighting all forms of intolerance and discrimination, three separate Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office have been appointed on:

- Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions

- Combating anti-Semitism
- Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims

Since their appointment, the three Personal Representatives have been very active liaising with OSCE participating States in their efforts to address problems related to intolerance, discrimination, racism and xenophobia. Their activities also aim at raising awareness of the problems under their mandate. They conduct country visits to discuss issues related to their mandate, highlight best practices and make recommendation for further action to combat intolerance and discrimination. As such, they also consult and co-operate closely with the ODIHR.

IV. OSCE activities corresponding to priority areas addressed by the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative

In order to promote implementation of its commitments related to promoting tolerance, non-discrimination and dialogue among its culturally and religiously diverse participating States, the OSCE has developed a number of targeted activities in all four priority areas identified by the Alliance of Civilizations High Level Group. The OSCE shares the understanding of the importance to produce and disseminate educational materials that teach about diverse faiths and cultures as well as the diversity within cultures and religions. With regard to media and communications, common grounds exist between the OSCE and the High Level Group on the need to pay particular attention at the internet as a major force and often a polarizing one – indeed, sometimes even a recruitment medium for extremist and terrorist forces. Furthermore, promoting the principle of responsible journalism is regarded by the OSCE as one of the key elements to stimulating tolerance among peoples. Likewise, the OSCE shares a belief that youth and youth leaders and networks must be fully engaged as vehicles and beneficiaries of action aimed at promoting better mutual understanding. In this respect, environmental issues can be a powerful catalyst bringing youth together on what is a share concern among the younger generations worldwide, promoting cooperative efforts to address global problems. Finally, migration and integration have been at the top of the OSCE’s agenda in 2005, leading to the recent presentation of a handbook on migration that aims at providing a set of best practices in this area and is the product of the discussion at last year’s OSCE Economic Forum.

Below is a brief summary of OSCE’s main activities in the four priority areas that can be of inspiration to the High Level Group in preparing its action plan to be presented to the UN General Assembly. It may also serve as an indication of the possible support the Organization may be able to provide to the implementation of the said action plan.

1. Education

“The participating States ...will endeavour to ensure that the objectives of education include special attention to the problem of racial prejudice and hatred and to the development of respect for different civilizations and cultures” (Copenhagen 1990, para 40.4)

“The promotion of human rights through education and training in the whole OSCE area could be viewed in the context of the OSCE’s comprehensive concept of security and is vital for the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as for the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination”. (Decision No11, Promotion of Human Rights Education and Training in the OSCE Area, MC Ljubljana 2005)

a) Activities of ODIHR in the area of education

- Education on Promoting Respect and Diversity

The ODIHR initiated a project on education promoting respect and diversity in support of those commitments related to the need for participating States to promote and enhance educational programmes for fostering tolerance, combating racism, xenophobia, discrimination and on encouraging the development of best practices. The project will focus on public education and will result in an assessment and overview of current educational programmes and tools for fostering respect and diversity and will offer recommendations to support States in their efforts to further strengthen their educational programmes. It further seeks to obtain a comprehensive overview of the methodology, curricula, teaching materials and training of teachers used and implemented in the OSCE region on education promoting respect and diversity, which will be used to produce Country overviews and made available on the ODIHR's Tolerance and Non-Discrimination public information database. Received information will be assessed by external experts and concrete recommendations for long-term strategies to enhance education promoting respect and diversity will be produced. Educational material will also be presented to raise awareness of the different manifestations and sources of intolerance against Muslims observed in the OSCE region today, including best practices in combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims and countering widespread misinformation and misinterpretation of Muslims and Islamic practices. In the area of education, ODIHR is available with expertise and assistance in order to develop methods and curricula for tolerance education in general, including fighting prejudice, intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions (Ljubljana Ministerial Decision N.10/05, para. 5.3)

- Education to Promote Remembrance of the Holocaust and to Combat Anti-Semitism

In the Declaration adopted at the OSCE conference on Anti-Semitism in Berlin in 2004 and the subsequent PC Decision No. 607, participating States committed themselves to promote the remembrance and education about the Holocaust and to promote educational programmes to combat Anti-Semitism. To assist OSCE States in implementing these commitments the ODIHR developed the study "*Education on the Holocaust and on Anti-Semitism in the OSCE region: An overview and Analysis of Educational Approaches*" providing an overview of existing efforts and recommendations where more needs to be done. As a follow-up to the study, the ODIHR developed, together with Yad Vashem Israel and experts from 12 OSCE States, guidelines for educators on the commemoration of Holocaust memorial days and guidelines on addressing contemporary anti-Semitism. These aim at supporting participating States in their implementation of practical guidelines and best practice modules to empower high school educators to teach about the Holocaust in their communities, direct them to age-appropriate resource options and combat anti-Semitism and intolerance. Country-specific teaching material for six OSCE states is currently under development with the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam and will be available in 2006.

- Combating racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti

- Roma and Sinti communities, together with other groups that share ethnic, linguistic and cultural ties, are subject of widespread discrimination throughout the OSCE region. The ODIHR is the primary OSCE institution responsible for reporting on the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for Roma and Sinti as well as for providing advice to participating States on specific issues related to key thematic areas, including addressing

socio-economic issues; improving access to education and enhancing participation in public and political life.

b) Activities of the HCNM

Education is crucial to the HCNM's longer term aim of reducing risks of tensions over minority issues. The bulk of his project work is in the field of education. Education is used as a tool to promote societal integration, inter alia through promoting a sound balance between state language education and education in the mother tongue and highlighting the advantages of multi-lingual education and also supporting state language education for members of the minority community in order to facilitate and increase their participation in economic and social life, as well as in public administration. The educational activities also include promoting intercultural education for all communities in multi-ethnic societies as a way of spreading understanding and appreciation of the benefits of diversity to the majority as well as the minority community. The importance of integrated as distinct from segregated education, in bringing members of all communities together and promoting integration, is stressed.

c) Other OSCE activities

Many of the OSCE field operations are actively engaged in addressing education, both formal and informal.

In **South-Eastern Europe** the OSCE Mission in **Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)** has been active in addressing the diversity of educational needs of all children and particularly the educational rights of returnee children. The Mission plans to monitor the drafting of a higher education law and the implementation of the right to education. In addition, the Mission intends to help strengthen school civic groups and improve their capacity to participate in decision making and to influence political decisions.

Some of the OSCE Missions, in co-operation with the OSCE's Senior Police Advisor, have been conducting basic police training programmes in Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kyrgyzstan, which included special courses on policing in a multi-ethnic society. OSCE courses also help raise police awareness of diversity and minority issues, including hate crimes based on belonging to ethnic minorities, religious beliefs, gender, disability etc.

In Central Asia, the OSCE Academy in Bishkek was launched in 2002. It is designed to promote and enhance OSCE's comprehensive concept of security through a distinctive approach towards education and training in accordance with the Central Asian political context. The Academy serves as a regional centre for post-graduate education and research on Central Asian topical issues and for building capacity, establishing regional dialogue, including on tolerance and non-discrimination that has the potential to stir up violence and social polarization in the region.

d) OSCE education activities related to economic and environmental affairs

One potential vehicle of 'bridge building' among civilizations is the common concern of all civilizations to preserve the ability of the earth to sustain future generations. While environmental risks may drive conflict wedges between communities and states, they can also be used to promote inter-regional or inter-national co-operation efforts. Addressing such issues at the root will provide for a sound basis upon which to build a peaceful co-existence

of civilizations. This rationale is the basic message of a programme initiated by OSCE, UNEP and UNDP called the Environment and Security Initiative.

e) OSCE pilot project “Our rights”

Under the 2005 Slovenian Chairmanship, the OSCE conducted a pilot project on human rights education entitled "Our Rights", based on the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The pilot project introduced a new user-friendly teaching tool which involved over 10,000 children and 276 teachers from 12 OSCE participating States. It led to the adoption by the OSCE Ministerial Council of a Decision on the Promotion of Human Rights Education and Training in the OSCE Area (MC.DEC/11/05). The evaluation of the OSCE pilot project “Our Rights” clearly shows that it contributed significantly to raising awareness in teaching and learning about human and children's rights within all participating countries. In 2006 additional participating States are conducting the project and many of those who have concluded the pilot project plan to continue with larger numbers of children included.

2. Media and Communications

“We, the Heads of State or Government, commit ourselves to ensuring the freedom of the media as a basic condition for pluralistic and democratic societies. We are deeply concerned about the exploitation of media in areas of conflict to foment hatred and ethnic tension and the use of legal restrictions and harassment to deprive citizens of free media”. (Istanbul Summit Declaration 1999)

“Decides to take strong public positions against hate speech and other manifestations of aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and violent extremism, as well as occurrences of discrimination based on religion or belief.” (Porto 2002)

“ Emphasizing the need for consistently and unequivocally speaking out against acts and manifestations of hate, particularly in political discourse, and working in favour of tolerance, mutual respect and understanding,...participating States commit to...consider developing, in close co-operation with civil society, concrete measures which do not endanger freedom of information and expression, in order to counter xenophobic stereotypes, intolerance and discrimination in the media and to encourage programmes to educate children and youth about prejudice or bias they may encounter in the media or on the Internet;” (Ljubljana Ministerial Council MC.DEC/10/05)

The Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM) implements activities in accordance with the principle that education, media awareness and development of Internet literacy should be seen as the most effective way of combating misperceptions, prejudices, ignorance, including hate speech or other offensive content. Relevant guidance can be found in the 2003 Amsterdam recommendations and the Internet Cookbook published in 2004. Education helps to understand symptoms of extremism and directly fights the roots of hatred by building tolerance.

The RFOM supports the development of the principle of responsible journalism and media self-regulation and appropriate mechanisms for ensuring increased professionalism, accuracy, and adherence to ethical standards among journalists. Such efforts target three distinct levels: individual journalists, the media outlets and the whole profession at national and/or international level, with the following goals: 1. defining ethical and professional parameters

of journalism, 2. reinforcing and adapting existing professional codes of conduct, 3. creating new forms of self-regulation where needed, 4. ensuring accurate coverage of the media and informed reporting, 5. adjusting the codes to societal, cultural and technological changes.

At the regional level, the RFOM organized a number of media conferences, in particular in Central Asia and the South Caucasus which created a unique opportunity to foster regional cooperation and common understanding between journalists, not only across state borders but also between different cultural backgrounds. This contributes to the development of a constructive dialogue and to countering hate speech. In addition, OSCE field operations have been conducting activities aimed at promoting media reform and drafting of media legislation, capacity building for journalists and media outlets, including in zones of conflict and monitoring of media freedom.

In addition to the activities of the RFOM, the HCNM has issued recommendations concerning broadcasting in minority languages, an important topic for integration.

3. Youth

“The participating States intend to further the development of contacts and exchange among people by encouraging awareness among youth of the importance of developing mutual understanding and of strengthening friendly relations and confidence among peoples”. (Helsinki Final Act, 1975)

“The OSCE’s efforts will in particular be targeted at the younger generation in order to build up their understanding of the need for tolerance and the importance of reconciliation and peaceful co-existence. Their outlook and perspective on the future are key. Where appropriate, the OSCE will therefore take on a stronger role in the field of education. An area such as human rights education would deserve particular attention.” (Maastricht 2003, OSCE Strategy)

The OSCE field operations pay particular attention to promoting youth initiatives and sustaining youth as a fundamental element in promoting comprehensive security in its region. In conducting activities with youth, the OSCE has adopted a comprehensive approach, with a view to promoting greater awareness and respect of the other, tolerance and respect for diversity through education; entrepreneurship to foster a greater hope for the future and greater activation and engagement through advocacy and exercise of political rights and the creation of youth councils. It has also fostered youth exchange programmes and the use of environmental activities as a means of forging cross-cultural and cross-national alliances.

For example, the Spillover Monitor Mission in Skopje has implemented a training programme on multiculturalism, anti-bias and peaceful conflict resolution targeting teachers, school boards and parents on fostering inter-cultural exchange as an instrument of reconciliation. The Mission has also assisted in raising awareness among primary school teachers of diversity and minority issues in the country and has implemented a project entitled "Youth Leadership Conferences" aimed at strengthening interethnic collaboration among secondary school students. In Central Asia, the OSCE reaches out to the youth by contributing to summer camps and schools and cross border camps and strengthening academic networks and dialogue.

4. Migration and integration

“The participating States restate that human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal, that they are also enjoyed by migrant workers wherever they live and stress the importance of implementing all CSCE commitments on migrant workers and their families lawfully residing in the participating States”. (Helsinki Document, 1992). “We (participating States) reaffirm that the protection and promotion of their rights, as well as the implementation of relevant international obligations, is our common concern.” (Paris Charter 1990)

“(Participating States) will continue to promote the integration of migrant workers in the societies in which they are lawfully residing. They recognize that a successful process of integration also depends on its active pursuit by the migrants themselves and decided therefore to encourage them in this regard.” (Budapest 1994) “Failure to integrate societies and failure also by everyone who resides in them to respect the rights of all can undermine stability.” (Maastricht 2003, OSCE Strategy)

“Participating States commit to take steps, in conformity with their domestic law and international obligations, against discrimination, intolerance and xenophobia against migrants and migrant workers... (and) to consider undertaking activities to raise public awareness of the enriching contribution of migrants and migrant workers to society.” (Sofia 2004).

In 2005 migration and integration was the priority of the Slovenian Chairmanship. In the Ljubljana Ministerial Council Decision on Migration, the OSCE participating States recognized that migration is becoming a more diverse and complex phenomenon, which needs to be addressed in a comprehensive manner and requires a cross-dimensional approach at the national, regional and international levels. They also acknowledged that successful integration policies that include respect for cultural and religious diversity and promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms are a factor in promoting stability and cohesion within our societies. Moreover, the Ministerial Decision on tolerance and non-discrimination (para 5.6) calls for states to continue to address the issue of migration and integration with respect for religious and cultural diversity as part of the overall efforts by the OSCE to promote tolerance, mutual respect and understanding. In a number of OSCE activities throughout 2005, participating States have identified how the OSCE, within its comprehensive approach to security, could contribute to developing effective migration policies. In 2005, the 13th OSCE Economic Forum, the Human Dimension Seminar and the annual Mediterranean Seminar were devoted to the issue of migration and integration. In co-operation with IOM and ILO, a Handbook on Establishing Effective Labour Migration Policies of Countries of Origin and Destination will be published, and promoted through a series of national and regional workshops. In accordance with the Ljubljana Ministerial decision on migration, the work on migration issues continues in all three dimensions and will be reported to the Brussels Ministerial Council

a) The OSCE Human Dimension Seminar on Migration and Integration

The ODIHR, in co-operation with the Slovenian Chairmanship of the OSCE, also organized the Human Dimension Seminar *on Migration and Integration* which was held in Warsaw on 11-13 May 2005. The Seminar examined ways to ensure the protection of the human rights of migrants and the efficient and harmonious integration of legal migrants, to the benefit of both the receiving society and the migrants themselves.

The Seminar explored four key aspects of integration policies:

- cross-border and inter-agency co-operation on migration issues;
- the legal framework including questions related to non-discrimination and access to the labour market;
- participation of migrants in public life, including the role of NGOs and migrant organizations;
- socio-cultural aspects of integration, which ensure that newcomers are not required to renounce their own identity, lifestyles and beliefs in order to adopt the identity of the receiving society, but may benefit from both.

A key conclusion from the Seminar was that that both sending and receiving countries stand to benefit from migration, provided that they take positive steps to combat discrimination and acts of intolerance against migrants and to ensure that conditions are created for integration without loss of identity.

b) Activities of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities' normative framework for the integration of minorities may provide an important contribution to the efforts toward building an Alliance of Civilizations. In the work of the HCNM, both in dealing with concrete situation of inter-ethnic tensions and outlining general recommendations on minority issues, an overarching idea is the concept of integration with respect for diversity. The aim of the HCNM is to help societies organize themselves around principles of non-discrimination, respect for diversity, integration and recognition of cultural differences. These all serve the purpose of forging an alliance of civilizations within states that hopefully will extend beyond national boundaries, as a society at peace with itself will more likely be at peace with its neighbours.

In 2005 the HCNM was closely involved in a debate organised by the Slovenian Chairmanship about migration and integration including the development of proposals for a decision on the principles of integration. Furthermore, the HCNM has recently commissioned a study of policies on integration and plans to present the result in a report to the summer session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

V. Other ongoing OSCE activities that are of relevance to the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative

In addition to the four main priority areas identified by the Alliance of Civilizations High Level Group, there are other fields of activity to which the OSCE has traditionally devoted considerable resources that have a direct bearing on attempts at building an Alliance of Civilizations. For example, human rights and democracy are of key importance, insofar as they are the real antidotes to extremism and violent and intolerant behaviour. The OSCE was the first international organization to elaborate a comprehensive approach to security, in which security is indivisible and pertains also to human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, and tolerance and non-discrimination.

The goal of establishing a true alliance of civilizations, in which every culture, faith or nationality/ethnicity enjoy equal treatment, legitimacy and dignity, as well as complete freedom to express and develop itself can be established through a variety of means. Inter-cultural partnerships among civilizations can be established through joint activities in areas as diverse as protecting the environment, combating trafficking in persons, fostering sustainable rural development and promoting professional unbiased and multi-ethnic policing. All these

while remaining sensible to the need to maintain a balance between the important struggle against terrorism and the equally important need to guarantee respect for human rights and the dignity of the individual.

Combating all forms of discrimination against women is an issue that deserves particular attention. Despite being a most valuable resource for any society, women are frequently the most vulnerable elements of society, in particular in situations of conflicts. In this context, the OSCE develops specific policies to encourage the full and equal participation of women and women's organizations in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation, and encourages and supports sharing experiences and best practices with women's peace initiatives (as stressed in the OSCE MC Decision No.14, Ljubljana 2005).

The OSCE recognizes that discrimination and violence against women constitutes a threat to human security. Thus, the OSCE provides assistance to its participating states to take all necessary legislative, policy and programmatic monitoring and evaluation measures to promote and protect the full enjoyment of the human rights of women and to prevent and combat all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls (as also stressed in the OSCE MC Decision No15, Ljubljana 2005).

1. Promoting democratic institution-building

“The participating States express their strong determination to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to abide by the rule of law, to promote the principles of democracy and, in this regard, to build, strengthen and protect democratic institutions, as well as to promote tolerance throughout society”. (Helsinki document, 1992, Summit)

Recent history proves the validity of the OSCE concept that a free society allowing everyone to fully participate in public life is a safeguard against conflict and instability. It is also the best catalyst to promoting tolerance and non-discrimination as powerful antidotes against extremism and social unrest. Conversely, the exclusion of individuals or certain groups from society has in the past led to tensions and sometimes even armed conflict.

As a community of countries committed to democracy, the OSCE places great emphasis on promoting democratic institutions and human rights, including the conduct of free and fair elections. For example, the election-related commitments agreed upon by all OSCE participating States in the 1990 Copenhagen Document emphasize fundamental principles that are central to a democratic tradition and can be summed up in seven key words: **universal, equal, fair, secret, free, transparent, and accountable.**

While these principles are often reflected among the formal electoral rights of citizens, this in itself is not enough; respective national authorities must demonstrate a commensurate level of political will to make elections genuinely democratic and meaningful. For this reason, the ODIHR, which was originally established as an Office for Free Elections, has traditionally devoted considerable resources to election observation in OSCE participating States, gaining a reputation as Europe's leading agency in the field of election observation, built upon a systematic, comprehensive, and verifiable election observation methodology. This methodology provides in-depth insight into all elements necessary for a democratic electoral process.

In practice, democratization is a continuous dual effort of "fine-tuning" democratic structures and processes and nurturing a democratic culture based on respect for human rights, the rule of law, peace, and security. Democracy is not restricted to one-off electoral events; it also requires democratic institutions that discharge their electoral mandate through consensus-driven, open, and transparent processes.

The May 2004 OSCE Human Dimension Seminar on "Democratic Institutions and Democratic Governance" stressed that, while democracy has made great gains in the OSCE region in recent years, there is still a need to strengthen democratic practices in order to complement more traditional institution-building activities. The participants recommended improving the transparency and inclusiveness of policy-making processes as a means of furthering implementation of OSCE commitments.

Consequently, the OSCE's, and especially the ODIHR's programmes for strengthening institutions, legal reform, and overall promotion of the rule of law have been strategically complemented by extending and developing activities aimed at strengthening democratic governance, in particular through increasing transparency and participation in policy-making. Key areas of activity have included

- Inclusion and participation, promoting participatory democracy and diversification of public consultation mechanisms;
- Supporting legislative processes, including strengthening consultation mechanisms at various levels of the law-drafting process, fostering genuine, inclusive public participation through public hearings and similar instruments
- Support to the development of political parties, including support for transparency and accountability to the electorate through equitable representation and the promotion of a rules-based intra-party democracy.

Traditional democratization efforts concentrated almost exclusively on legal reform, institution building and, most notably, civil society (i.e. NGOs) strengthening. The OSCE's, and in particular the ODIHR's approach is to "glue" these democratization pillars together so they interact in an effective, inclusive and democratic way. Democratic governance being a set of rules, norms and traditions, cannot be taught but can only be acquired through gradual familiarization and integration, adapting it to local circumstances.

Political parties and their interface towards civil society are enjoying new attention. In a slow process of critical self-analysis, political parties are drawn to think about their purpose in a (democratic) society and how their efficiency and representativeness can be improved by modernising their institutional framework and strengthening them by the same token. Similarly, participation in law-making is sought through increased transparency of the legislative process and by establishing venues for consultation so that all opinions are heard and reflected upon. Finally, effective participation can only be expected if the actors are well-informed and in possession of verifiable arguments. Think-tanks fulfil a dual mission by serving on the one hand as a sounding-board for government to take a critical look at executive or parliamentary drafts from a neutral (or society-wide) point of view. On the other hand, these think-tanks are the sources of information par excellence for citizens and media to get an informed opinion on matters of governance and policies.

2. *Promoting respect for human rights*

The Helsinki Final Act acknowledges as one of its guiding principles the “(r)espect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief”. This constitutes a milestone in the history of human rights protection. For the first time, human rights principles were included as an explicit and integral element of a regional security framework on the same basis as politico-military and economic issues, and there is no hierarchy among these principles.

A fundamental aspect of the OSCE’s human dimension is that human rights and pluralistic democracy are not considered an internal affair of a state. The participating States have stressed that issues relating to human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law are of international concern, as respect for these rights and freedoms constitutes one of the foundations of the international order. In fact, the participating States “categorically and irrevocably” declared that the “commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the OSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned” (Moscow Document, 1991). They have also linked human rights with the institutional and political system of a state insofar as, in essence, the OSCE states have agreed through their human dimension commitments that pluralistic democracy based on the rule of law is the only system of government suitable to guarantee human rights effectively. This makes the OSCE not only a community of common norms, principles, commitments and values, but also a community of responsibility, providing each participating State the right to criticize other states concerning violations of human dimension commitments but also on the duty to assist each other in solving specific problems.

OSCE commitments reflect traditional human rights and freedoms, as well as some areas beyond the scope of traditional human rights law. As in other human rights treaties, an important question is the extent to which rights can be limited. The OSCE Copenhagen Document stipulates an important general rule, that human rights will not be subject to any restrictions except those provided for by the law and consistent with other obligations under international law, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The OSCE human rights framework exists for the benefit of all people living in the OSCE area. The first responsibility for guaranteeing these rights lies with the OSCE participating States. The OSCE human dimension commitments are addressed — in line with other international human rights treaties — to the participating States. The commitments reinforce this general principle in stressing that “the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms is one of the basic purposes of government”.

From the beginning, it was clear that formulating standards alone is not sufficient for the effective implementation of human dimension commitments. Consequently, the OSCE has created a set of procedures, conferences, and institutions that help to monitor and assist with the implementation of OSCE human dimension commitments. Unlike other human rights treaties, the OSCE has not created a court or other individual petition body to ensure the implementation of OSCE commitments.

The Helsinki Final Act provided for regular follow-up conferences, reflecting the understanding that a continuous dialogue is needed to make the agreement effective. This process approach has created over time a refined system of political summits and other

conferences where the implementation of OSCE commitments is discussed. An important feature of OSCE human dimension meetings is that they are open to the active participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In addition to these regular meetings, the OSCE has also created a so-called human dimension mechanism, the Vienna Mechanism and the Moscow Mechanism, the latter partly constituting a further elaboration of the Vienna Mechanism. Together, they set out a process for supervising the implementation of human dimension commitments to be invoked on an ad hoc basis by any individual OSCE participating State.

The Vienna Mechanism allows a participating State, through a set of procedures, to raise questions relating to the human dimension in another OSCE participating State. The Moscow Mechanism builds on this and provides for the additional possibility to establish ad hoc missions of independent experts to assist in the resolution of a specific human dimension problem. This includes the right to investigate alleged violations of human dimension commitments, in exceptional circumstances even without the consent of the state in question.

Furthermore, in order to review the state of implementation of its human dimension commitments, and make recommendations for follow-up, each year the OSCE participating States gather in Warsaw for the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. Several Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings are also organized in the course of the year, on selected issues at the top of the OSCE agenda in the human dimension. These events foresee a substantial participation by NGOs, who provide valuable input and recommendations to the participating States.

Departing from the conference approach of its early years, the OSCE has established a number of permanent institutions to assist participating States with the implementation of OSCE human dimension commitments. These are, as mentioned, the ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media. OSCE field operations also play an important part in assisting participating States implement their OSCE commitments, including those pertaining to the human dimension and human rights

In addition to the activities outlined throughout this paper, which for the most part have human rights considerations inbuilt in them, the OSCE conducts a wide range of additional activities, demonstrating the OSCE's proactive approach to other human-rights-related issues, by offering training and education and responding to specific concerns such as the protection of human rights in the global fight against terrorism. The ODIHR is the OSCE's main institution charged with promoting respect for human rights. It approaches issues from a variety of perspectives, including training, research, reporting, and technical assistance. The ODIHR also organizes several major meetings every year that are dedicated to particular human-rights topics.

Human rights and terrorism

The 2001 Bucharest Plan of Action for Combating Terrorism, a direct outcome of Decision No.1 on Combating Terrorism of the 55 OSCE participating States at the Ministerial Council in Bucharest, mandated the ODIHR to promote and enhance tolerance, coexistence and harmonious relations between ethnic, religious, linguistic and other groups as well as constructive co-operation among participating States in this regard. The Bucharest Plan further tasked the ODIHR to provide early warning of and appropriate responses to violence,

intolerance, extremism and discrimination against these groups and, at the same time, to promote their respect for the rule of law, democratic values and individual freedoms. The Bucharest Plan also mandated the ODIHR to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity.

In 2004, the ODIHR, in co-operation with the OSCE Secretariat's Anti-Terrorism Unit and the OSCE Centre in Almaty, partnered with the Government of Kazakhstan to hold a roundtable on combating extremism. This event, organised in Almaty on 1-2 July 2004, was the first to address the issue of extremism in the context of terrorism since the Baku and Bishkek 2002 conferences hosted by ODIHR and the Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

The ODIHR currently aims to organise a multi-disciplinary roundtable on the prevention of violent extremism in late 2006. This roundtable will bring together experts from a number of different disciplines including law-enforcement, tolerance and non-discrimination and others from across the OSCE region and other international organisations to discuss appropriate future approaches to prevent violent extremism. A cross-dimensional approach will ensure that the issues are looked at holistically with long-term benefits. The OSCE is in a unique position to take a genuinely multi-dimensional approach to address factors that may engender violent extremism. In turn, this approach is crucial in developing a comprehensive, effective and sustainable strategy to prevent and combat terrorism.

3. Promoting and facilitating intercultural and inter-faith dialogue and partnership aimed at tolerance, mutual respect and understanding

“The Ministerial Council,... recalling the importance of promoting and facilitating intercultural and inter faith dialogue and partnerships aimed at tolerance, mutual respect and understanding, at both the national and the international levels, decides that participating States while implementing their commitments to promote tolerance and non-discrimination will focus their activities in such fields as, inter alia, legislation, law enforcement, education, media, data collection, migration and integration, religious freedom, inter-cultural dialogue and inter-faith dialogue, and commit to: [...] effective protection of the law and prohibit acts of intolerance and discrimination, [...] encourage public and private educational programmes that promote tolerance and non-discrimination, and raise public awareness of the existence and the unacceptability of intolerance and discrimination.”
(Decision on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination: Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding, 13th Ministerial Council, Ljubljana 2005)

Recently, the OSCE focus on promoting tolerance and non-discrimination has been embodied in declarations adopted over a series of conferences beginning with the 2003 Vienna Conference on “Anti-Semitism and on Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination”, followed by three similar conferences in 2004, in Berlin on Anti-Semitism, in Paris on the “Relationship between Racist, Xenophobic and Anti-Semitic Propaganda on the Internet and Hate Crimes”, in Brussels on “Tolerance and the Fight against Racism Xenophobia and Discrimination”. A fourth conference was eventually held in Cordoba in 2005 on “Anti-Semitism and other Forms of Intolerance”. During 2006, the OSCE convened one implementation meeting on promoting inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-ethnic understanding, in Kazakhstan in June and will convene on further tolerance implementation meeting with a focus on education in Dubrovnik, Croatia, on 23 and 24 October 2006.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly plays a key role in raising awareness in the implementation of OSCE commitments regarding racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance and discrimination.

The ODIHR's Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Programme also provides support to participating States in implementing their OSCE commitments and in strengthening their efforts to respond to, and combat, hate crimes and violent manifestations of intolerance. It also aims to strengthen civil society's capacity to respond to hate-motivated crimes and incidents. The ODIHR's activities are focused on the following areas: legislative assistance; law-enforcement training; monitoring, reporting on, and following up on, responses to hate-motivated crimes and incidents; as well as educational activities to promote tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding.

The three Personal Representatives of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office also play a crucial role in maintaining high awareness among the OSCE participating States on issues related to intolerance and discrimination. Their activities concentrate on assisting and supporting participating States in their efforts at fighting discrimination and intolerance, but they are also a tool to alert the OSCE of situations that risk generating tensions stemming from intolerance. They also liaise with all OSCE institutions, especially ODIHR, in promoting activities aimed at promoting tolerance and non-discrimination.

a) The OSCE series of conferences on tolerance

In April 2004, more than 500 delegates from OSCE participating and Partner States met in Berlin for an OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism. The meeting was attended by many ministers, high-level politicians and public figures. Key topics for discussion at the event were the roles of government, civil society, education and media in combating anti-Semitism and in promoting tolerance. The Chairman-in-Office concluded conference with what he called the "Berlin Declaration", which condemned all manifestations of anti-Semitism and committed the OSCE participating States to take specific, practical counter-measures in this regard, including the submission of information and statistics on anti-Semitic and other hate crimes to the ODIHR. The ODIHR was tasked by the Permanent Council with reporting on and publicly disseminating this information as well as closely following anti-Semitic incidents in the OSCE area.

In June of the same year, a meeting in Paris enlarged the ongoing debate on intolerance by including the Internet as the most modern means of global communication. On this occasion, senior officials from OSCE participating States, together with professionals from the Internet industry and NGO experts exchanged views on whether the upsurge in hate crimes in OSCE countries could be related to the reportedly steady increase of racist and anti-Semitic content on the Internet. Several countries called on the OSCE to take steps against such Internet content and hold Internet providers responsible for their sites. Others warned of stifling the diversity of the Internet as a modern information tool and emphasized the role of self-regulation, educational measures and best practices. In following up to the Meeting, the OSCE Permanent Council adopted Decision No. 633 on Promoting Tolerance and Media Freedom on the Internet, which commits the participating States of the OSCE to take concrete actions in combating hate crimes, which can be fuelled by racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic propaganda on the Internet.

These two conferences were followed by the Brussels Conference on Tolerance and the Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, which took place in September 2004. Some 700 government representatives, among them many ministers, public figures and leaders of civil society, discussed actions that best promote tolerance and bring forward effective measures to combat discrimination and xenophobia in the OSCE region. The Chairman-in-Office, on behalf of the participating States, concluded the conference with what he called the “Brussels Declaration” that, among other issues, condemned without reserve all forms of racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism and other acts of intolerance, including against Muslims as well as all organizations and individuals promoting such hatred or acts, and urged a structural follow-up to ensure implementation of the commitments on tolerance and non-discrimination. The Declaration also underlined the commitment of participating States to promote and facilitate open and transparent interfaith and intercultural dialogue and to consider establishing training programmes for law enforcement and judicial officials on legislation and enforcement of legislation related to hate crimes.

As urged by the Sofia Ministerial Council, the Slovenian Chairmanship organized the OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism and On Other Forms of Intolerance, which took place on 8 and 9 June 2005 in Cordoba, Spain. The conference defined and summarized the work done by the OSCE in 2004. Its main message was reflected in the CiO’s Cordoba Declaration. On the one hand, the conference addressed various aspects of fighting anti-Semitism; on the other, it tackled fighting other forms of intolerance and discrimination, including racism and xenophobia. For the first time in the OSCE framework, the topic of intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions was discussed during two formal working sessions. These discussions highlighted the role of the media, education, law enforcement and legislation. They emphasized the growing need to address tolerance and non-discrimination issues through the promotion of mutual respect and understanding, as well as the need for full implementation of OSCE commitments in this field.

On 12-13 June 2006, the OSCE held an implementation meeting on promoting inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-ethnic understanding in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Meeting participants underlined the importance of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic institutions in creating a context for tolerance and mutual understanding. They identified an increased need for governments and civil society to further promote such understanding with a view to ensuring inclusiveness, respect for diversity and freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief.

A Special Day on tolerance and non-discrimination will be held at the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw from 2 to 13 October, and a Tolerance Implementation Meeting with a focus on education will be held in Dubrovnik, Croatia, on 23 and 24 October.

b) Promoting Inter-Cultural and Inter-Faith Dialogue and Freedom of Belief

The role of the ODIHR in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, including its efforts to support participating States and civil society in the promotion of freedom of religion or belief and inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue was enhanced by the adoption of the Maastricht, Sofia and Ljubljana Ministerial Council Decisions on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination. In these Decisions, the ODIHR is tasked to implement a wide range of specific activities related to promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. The ODIHR also works closely with the three OSCE Representatives on tolerance and non-discrimination to

identify common approaches and strategies in addressing intolerance and promoting inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue and partnerships.

The OSCE Centre in Dushanbe has been conducting seminars on law and religion at the local level throughout the country. The seminars bring together regional authorities, representatives of the state commission on religions affairs, NGOs, political parties and clergy to discuss the relationship between Islamic law and practices and national legislation, which is based on the secular principle of separation between state and religion.

- **Promoting freedom of religion or belief**

The ODIHR Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief was established to act as an advisory and consultative body to the ODIHR for promoting freedom of religion or belief in the OSCE area. The basis for the work of the Advisory Panel is the OSCE commitments on freedom of religion or belief, which were already enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. At present, 33 of the 56 participating States have nominated a total of 59 members on the Advisory Panel, 15 of whom form the Advisory Council. To a large extent, the activities of the Advisory Panel pertain to conflict prevention and include the following:

- Observing the compliance of national legislation of OSCE participating States with OSCE commitments pertaining to freedom of religion or belief and providing expert legislative review and other legal assistance to the participating States;
- Providing advice on conflict prevention, dialogue, and reconciliation;
- Informing the ODIHR about important developments and major trends relating to freedom of religion or belief in the OSCE area;
- Advising the ODIHR on experts, resources, and partner organizations that can be approached for promoting issues of freedom of religion or belief in the OSCE area;
- Serving as a monitoring and early warning resource to the ODIHR, following cases of violation of OSCE commitments pertaining to freedom of religion or belief;
- Providing advice and guidance to the ODIHR on policies to improve and strengthen adherence to OSCE commitments pertaining to freedom of religion or belief.

- **Collecting and disseminating good practices related to inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue**

The ODIHR's Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Programme is currently developing a system to manage the information collected from participating States, practitioners/educators, NGOs and other partners according to the tasks given by recent Ministerial Decisions. A dedicated website was launched in 2006 to share and promote good initiatives and provide information on issues related to tolerance and non-discrimination in the OSCE region. At the end of 2005 a joint initiative between the ODIHR and HURIDOCS was established to make NGO information available on the ODIHR's website via the search engine Hurisearch.

- **Supporting the Development of Inter-Cultural and Inter-Faith Partnerships among Civil Society**

The ODIHR's Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Programme has identified more than 400 NGOs working in the area of tolerance and non discrimination, many working on combating intolerance and promoting intercultural dialogue. The ODIHR has also undertaken efforts to promote dialogue between NGOs defending victims of hate-motivated violence by organizing joint roundtable discussions and trainings, to facilitate the exchange of good practices, transmit knowledge and experience and build coalitions on specific topics. The ODIHR also conducted specific outreach with NGOs dealing with discrimination against Muslims in 2005

in order to identify key issues of concern for Muslim communities in the OSCE region and to encourage the inclusion of such concerns at relevant OSCE forums. In May 2006, a follow-up event was convened to identify good practices and strategies in order to counter discriminatory elements in public discourse, and specifically in the Media. The event addressed the negative portrayal of Muslims as well as common-place myths such as the 'clash of civilizations' theory in public and political discourse. Furthermore, an NGO event organized on 11 June 2006 in Almaty provided an opportunity for all NGOs working to counter racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance including against Muslims and Roma to work collaboratively together to tackle common issues of intolerance and to identify common solutions to their common problems. In addition, ODIHR is considering specific outreach with NGOs dealing with discrimination against Christians and members of other religions in order to identify key issues of concerns for them in the OSCE region and to encourage the inclusion of such concerns at relevant OSCE forums

c) Activities by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

The Parliamentary Assembly's discussions have, for many years, reflected the concerns of the citizens of the OSCE on issues of intolerance and discrimination. Dialogue amongst parliamentarians from different countries has permitted exchanges of good practice in legislation between participating States, and with parliamentarians from Partner States, who participate in OSCE PA activities.

The OSCE PA has regularly called for effective action to combat intolerance and hate crimes in the OSCE region. OSCE Parliamentarians have worked for increased attention to the problems of intolerance both at the national and at the international level, and have encouraged open dialogue as an important way forward in countering intolerance.

During its 2006 Winter Meeting, the Parliamentary Assembly held a Special Debate on "The Present World Crisis Regarding Freedom of Expression and Respect for Religious Beliefs". During the debate parliamentarians from delegations across the OSCE and from Mediterranean Partners took the floor to offer their comments. The main ideas expressed by participants in the debate were the utter condemnation of the unjustifiable violent acts and the call for exercising freedom of expression with a sense of responsibility. Other issues, such as the role of the press in democratic societies, the principle of secularism, blasphemy laws, the importance of educating in tolerance, inter-religious dialogue and the need to fight all kinds of extremisms, were also discussed during the debate. A concrete proposal was put forward to develop initiatives on how parliamentarians can contribute to resolving these issues. The debate, was a part of the OSCE PA's ongoing efforts to contribute to inter-cultural understanding, and built upon recommendations that the OSCE PA has passed on tolerance issues in recent years.

d) Other recent OSCE activities

Many OSCE field operations implement activities related to promotion of inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue. For example, the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina assisted in efforts to reconstruct the Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka through mediation and confidence building between different communities involved in this process. The OSCE Presence in Albania has co-sponsored the creation of a "South-East Europe Inter-religious Network" in order to strengthen the relationships among the religious leaders of South East Europe and their skills for mediating conflict. In the Caucasus, the OSCE Mission in Georgia along with ODIHR has supported the government in elaborating legal provisions on freedom of religion, and some NGOs and the Public Defender's Office in establishing a Religious

Council in July 2005. The mission is also involved in elaborating a National Action Plan on Human Rights, focussing also on religious tolerance. In 2005 the OSCE Centre in Almaty in a series of seminars stressed the importance of a robust inter-confessional and inter-ethnic dialogue as a means of promoting alternative measures to prevent extremism.

e) OSCE activities in the area of Policing

In 2005, the OSCE organized a meeting of police experts to examine matters related to improving the effectiveness of law enforcement in preventing and combating hate crimes within OSCE participating States, and to provide law enforcement trainers and practitioners with the opportunity to share technical information and good practices. The meeting was organized by the Strategic Police Matters Unit in close co-operation with the ODIHR Law Enforcement Officer Training Programme for Combating Hate Crimes, and focused on the police response to aspects of intolerance.

The HCNM has recently produced a series of recommendations drawn up by experts on policing in multi-ethnic societies which highlight important issues such as the means of establishing communication and cooperation between police and minorities at all levels

The ODIHR's Law Enforcement Officer Programme on Combating Hate Crime was developed to increase the capacity of law enforcement officials to identify and respond effectively to hate crime and engage with affected communities. It was designed and delivered by police officers for police officers from six OSCE states and was piloted in Spain and Hungary in May 2005. The programme is currently being implemented in Croatia and Ukraine.

4. Gender equality (Women)

“The full and equal exercise by women of their human rights is essential to achieve a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic OSCE area. We are committed to making equality between men and women an integral part of policies, both at the level of our States and within the Organization”. (OSCE Charter for European Security, Istanbul, 1999)

a) Promotion of Gender equality in the OSCE

The OSCE has committed itself to promoting and achieving equality between women and men. It has established an OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, adopted by the 2004 Sofia Ministerial Council, as a framework to counter gender discrimination through mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout all levels, policies, and activities of the OSCE. On that occasion, the OSCE Ministers recalled the UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) which stresses the importance of women's full and equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The Action Plan highlights several areas in which activities are to be developed in order to promote gender equality in participating States. These include ensuring non-discriminatory legal and policy frameworks, preventing violence against women; ensuring equal opportunity for participation of women in political and public life; encouraging women's participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction; promoting equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere; and building national mechanisms for the advancement of women. OSCE structures are tasked to assist participating States in the implementation of relevant commitments to promote equality between women and men.

b) Work by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

At its July 1998 Annual Session in Copenhagen, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly urged that gender aspects be considered in all staff recruitment in the OSCE, and further urged the OSCE to implement gender mainstreaming in all its activities. The Parliamentarians called upon the Ministerial Council to instruct all OSCE Institutions to take effective steps to ensure the implementation of recommendations referring to the full participation of women in the activities of the OSCE, including at decision-making levels.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative on Gender Issues has continued to gather information and statistics on gender equality in the OSCE, and regularly presents the OSCE PA Gender Report to the Assembly. She works to promote dialogue on the issue of equality between men and women and has established an informal network of parliamentarians in the OSCE who are particularly interested in this issue.

c) Activities of the ODIHR to promote gender equality

Recognizing the long-term nature of processes within the Human Dimension, the ODIHR works to assist participating States to promote gender equality, based on the strategy of fostering a policy-dialogue with governments and civil society in order to strengthen their commitment to gender equality as a fundamental element of protecting human rights and fostering democratic development. This approach underscores the key principle of the OSCE's policy in the field of gender equality that "equal rights of women and men and the protection of their human rights are essential to peace, sustainable democracy, economic development and therefore to security and stability in the OSCE region" (Decision No. 14/04, 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality).

The guiding principles of the ODIHR's work in promoting gender equality are: mainstreaming a gender perspective into activities, policies, projects and programmes of the Organization; promoting gender equality in participating States; and supporting participating States in implementing relevant commitments to promote equality between women and men. Priority areas in this work are focused around the following provisions of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality:

- Ensuring equal opportunity for participation of women in political and public life (Chapter V, Para 44 (d))
- Ensuring non-discriminatory legal and policy frameworks (Chapter V, Para 44 (b))
- Preventing violence against women (Chapter V, Para 44 (c))
- Encouraging women's participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction (Chapter V, Para 44 (e))
- Promoting equal opportunities for women in the economic field (Chapter V, Para 44 (f))
- Building national mechanisms for the advancement of women (Chapter V, Para 44 (g))

Specific activities conducted to promote these goals include fostering cooperation among civil society and government to promote advancement of women's rights and gender equality; promoting women's political participation, leadership development and coalition building among civil society actors to support necessary reforms in policy and practice, prevention and combating of domestic violence and development of national gender expertise among local stakeholders at national and cross-regional levels. Upon request from the participating States and/or OSCE field presences, provides assistance in legal review of draft laws and amendments related to gender equality issues.

d) Other OSCE Activities in promoting Gender equality

OSCE field operations have appointed focal points or gender officers who support the implementation of the Action Plan and the process of gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes. Together with local partners they develop or support gender-related projects and activities and promote the integration of a gender perspective into relevant programmes. For example, the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina established a Gender Task Force Advisory Board, which has been dealing with the issues of the role of woman in political, social and economic life of the country and assisted in drafting the national law on gender equality. The Mission to Serbia and Montenegro provides support to gender equality mechanisms in municipalities and also to ministries dealing with gender issues. The Mission assists the Government's Council for Gender Equality in the work on the National Gender Action Plan which focuses primarily on improving the position of women on the labour market and addresses other areas such as education, decision-making, media, health and violence against women. The OSCE Centre in Dushanbe has funded nine women's resource centres in order to raise awareness on human rights, provide free legal consultations and help women develop professional skills. Seminars and TV programmes on gender equality compared secular law with traditional and Shariah law in the framework of the project Women's Rights in Islam. The Mission also provides assistance in the implementation of the Gender Equality Law of Tajikistan.

5. Combating trafficking in human beings

“A comprehensive approach to trafficking in human beings requires a focus on bringing to justice those responsible for this crime, and on carrying out effective measures to prevent it, while maintaining a humanitarian and compassionate approach in rendering assistance to its victims.” (OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 2, Maastricht 2003)

The OSCE Special Representative to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and the OSCE Anti-Trafficking Assistance Unit, as well as ODIHR's anti-trafficking programme, assist OSCE participating States in the implementation of commitments and full usage of recommendations proposed by the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. Their mandate includes assisting participating states, at their request, with the development and implementation of national strategies and action plans on the basis of the three “Ps”, prevention, protection and (investigation and) prosecution. The Special Representative has initiated a close partnership with relevant international actors under the heading, "Alliance Against Trafficking in Persons," with a view to further developing joint strategies.

Trafficking in Human Beings has implications for OSCE participating States that extend far beyond the incalculable harm suffered by the victims. It has serious security implications, insofar as it is a highly profitable activity for organized crime and insofar as the continued violation of international borders for illegal trade in human life will erode relations among nations by exacerbating suspicion and mistrust as well as sustained efforts at maintaining the rule of law. The social and economic imbalances resulting from exploitative markets have not been sufficiently measured but risk areas include the loss of valuable social capital and an erosion of systems of governance as these practices thrive on corruption and illicit activity.

Conversely, combating trafficking in human beings can be a potential area of cooperation and partnership among different communities to be supported by Alliance of Civilizations Initiative.

VI. OSCE dialogue with the Mediterranean and Asian Partner States, as well as other organizations

Since its inception in 1975, the OSCE has recognized the linkage between security in Europe and in other regions. To the original group of Mediterranean countries that were associated at the time of the Helsinki process, in the 1990s OSCE also developed relations with a number of countries in Asia. Today the OSCE's Partners for Co-operation are: Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Jordan, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Morocco, Thailand and Tunisia. The main objective of the OSCE's dialogue with its Partners for Co-operation is to facilitate the interchange of information of mutual interest and the generation of ideas on how to increase mutual security.

Today, OSCE's Partners for Co-operation are involved in all streams of the Organization's activity at the political level. They actively participate in all main OSCE events in the year, frequently providing experts that contribute to the debate and bring a broad perspective to the discussion at hand from the point of view of their respective regions. They also contribute with ideas how further to improve on mutual security in tackling current and potential security threats, old and new.

The Partner States' important contribution was duly acknowledged in a number of OSCE documents, including the Maastricht Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the XXI Century, which states that *"As threats originating or evolving in adjacent regions are of increasing importance, the OSCE will intensify its co operation with its Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co operation, by early identification of areas of common interest and concern and possibilities for further co-ordinated action."* Furthermore, the Strategy encourages Partner States to voluntarily implement the principles and commitments of the OSCE and offers OSCE's co-operation with them in this as appropriate. The Strategy also commits the OSCE to consider ways in which OSCE common norms, principles, commitments and values could be shared with other regions, in particular neighbouring areas.

Every year, the highlights of the OSCE's work with its Partner States are the annual Mediterranean Seminar and the annual conference with an Asian Partner. Over the years, such events have concentrated on issues that have a direct bearing on the work of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative. In particular, the 2005 Mediterranean Seminar concentrated on migration and integration, whereas the 2006 OSCE-Thailand conference concentrated on the issues of poverty and pandemics. One of the main proposals arising from the 2005 Seminar concerned the establishment of a dedicated Partnership Fund to sponsor activities aimed at further stimulating Partners' involvement in the work of the OSCE across the three dimensions of security. Partner States have been particularly involved in all recent OSCE events related to promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, and have also been consulted on the preparation of this contribution.

As the only pan-European regional arrangement under the terms of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, and on the basis of the 1999 Istanbul Platform for Co-operative Security, the OSCE pays special attention to relations with partner organizations and institutions concerned with the promotion of a comprehensive approach to security in its region. In the aftermath of 11 September 2001, participating States also decided to broaden dialogue with organizations outside the OSCE region. In particular, the Bucharest and Maastricht Ministerial Council decisions make reference to organizations such as the AU, the LAS, the OIC and others. In

the last few years, several initiatives were taken to fulfil this pledge; such as for example cross representation at each other's events (including a recent address by the Secretary General of the OIC to the OSCE Permanent Council). A number of organizations out of the OSCE area are regularly invited to the main OSCE events, including the regular Ministerial Council meetings. Reciprocal visits and briefings between the OSCE and a number of out of region organizations have been held during the last years. Upon request of the SG of the League of Arab States, in 2004 the OSCE translated its SALW best practices guide into Arabic. Further avenues will be explored to increase dialogue with organizations such as the Council of Europe and the OIC on issues related to tolerance and non-discrimination.

VII. Conclusions and the way forward

This paper was aimed at providing a brief introduction to members of the High Level Group on the OSCE's conceptual framework, its tools and the range of activities it has been conducting over the years to promote greater tolerance and non-discrimination among its participating States. The OSCE stands ready to provide further information on its commitments and on its activities upon request by the High Level Group of the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative.

The OSCE has traditionally held tolerance and non-discrimination, as well as cultural exchanges and dialogue among its participating and Partner States to be among the key elements for promoting comprehensive security and stability in its region. It has been kept on the OSCE Ministerial Council agenda for the last three years, leading to three consecutive ministerial decisions being adopted. They were in addition to the many activities highlighted above. As mentioned, in view of its comprehensive and inclusive approach to security as a forum for permanent political dialogue among a culturally and religiously diverse collective of 56 participating and 11 Partner States the OSCE can in itself already be viewed as an alliance of civilizations.

As an initiative, the Alliance of Civilizations was launched by the UN Secretary-General to forge collective political will and to mobilize concerted action to build on the consensus that all societies are interdependent, bound together in their development and security, and in their environmental, economic and financial well-being, while at the same time countering trends toward extremism by establishing a paradigm of mutual respect between civilizations and cultures. Within the context of the Alliance, calls were already made to distinguish between those values which need to be consolidated and honoured across all cultures, such as human rights and democratic governance, and those values which, being distinct to different cultures, contribute to the richness and potential of human existence and as such need to be protected and respected. Furthermore, it was noted that no conflict is to be seen as either inevitable or permanent and that civilizations do not arise in a void nor do they survive in isolation, but only through interaction and engagement with one another with the full engagement of common people and mass populations.

Clearly, the OSCE shares much common ground with the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative and through its political debate and commitments, as well as its expert activities, has already provided a substantial contribution to promoting the same goals and aims as the Alliance in its own region. Some of these activities, provided the Alliance is successful in catalyzing the necessary consensus, could be replicated on a global scale under the aegis of the UN. Indeed, some of its tools and mechanisms, such as the ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the three Personal Representatives on tolerance could serve as an important source of inspiration to the Alliance to establish similar mechanisms either at the global level, or in conflict-ridden regions in which such mechanisms are lacking.

That said, as a major forum for political discussion, the OSCE remains engaged to continue promoting tolerance and non-discrimination in the future. Its participating States are in the process of identifying avenues for further OSCE action in this sphere. For example, following the Ljubljana decision, but also the so-called cartoon crisis, a special Working Group on Human Protection and Non-discrimination was established at the beginning of 2006. The Working Group is looking at a number of areas, including a possible OSCE role in support of the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative. In the context of the Working Group, participating

States are also considering the possibility of one further Ministerial decision on tolerance and non-discrimination to be adopted at the end of the year.

A number of activities has already been agreed upon by the participating States, such as the roundtable with Muslim NGOs hosted by ODIHR in Warsaw on 9 May 2006, or the already mentioned events in Almaty and Dubrovnik.

Other proposals are also being considered by the participating States based on a food-for-thought paper elaborated by the Belgian Chairmanship and it will become clearer in the latter part of the year what further concrete contribution the OSCE could make. In this process, it will be important to seek harmony and mutual reinforcement in the work and public expression of the OSCE Chairmanship, Personal Representatives, institutions and Secretariat on promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. The Parliamentary Assembly should complement this harmony.

Building a true alliance of civilizations is clearly a complex and multi-faceted task which should touch on all dimensions of security. The main goals of the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative touch on a set of important issues that require, first and foremost, a constant dialogue among all the parties involved. Such dialogue should be systematic and sustained and be conducted at all levels, political but also with the full engagement of civil society. The very history of OSCE teaches that there is no substitute for it, even on the most contentious issues. Indeed, the success of any initiative aimed at building a true alliance of civilizations will need to reach all levels of society, from the grass-roots to the decision-making levels, in order to ensure that the notions of tolerance, non-discrimination, mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence are universally perceived.

As for the contents of the prospective action plan for the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative, the High-level Group has already identified a number of priority areas, which are at the core of this endeavour. However, this paper has strived to argue that other areas also play an important part to reach the same goal.

The promotion of democratic institutions and human rights, with inbuilt systematic processes of consultation with civil society in the spirit of representative and transparent government is of paramount importance. Only fully democratic and participatory societies can create the conditions for all civilizations and religions to live in peace with each other in full respect for each other's diversity. At the same time, it is only through a fully participatory process that any society can draw the benefits of the contribution from all its constituent elements, be they religious, ethnic, national or other groups. Furthermore, it is only in true democratic societies that fully respect the principles of fundamental human rights for all that can foster the conditions to guarantee the basic freedoms of conscience, thought, religion and belief, while at the same time striking a balance with freedom of expression.

Equally, the empowerment of women to allow them to realize their full contribution to the development of peaceful and stable societies and full participation in society should be mainstreamed in all activities under the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative. Significantly, it has been proved time and again that promoting women empowerment is a very effective tool to build cross-cultural and cross-ethnic bonds and solidarity. Countering their common vulnerable position in society has proven to be a stronger agglutinating incentive for women than other potentially divisive questions related to nationality, ethnicity or religion. Law enforcement bodies also have a key role to play in promoting an alliance of civilizations.

Truly representative police forces, sensitive to the main concerns of different cultural and ethnic groups in society are a key tool to prevent tensions in a named society. Moreover, issues related to promoting sustainable environmental development and protection, combating trafficking in human beings and others draw on a set of universally recognized values that can be powerful elements in uniting people from different groups. At the same time, however, countering organizations that promote terrorism and the rhetoric of a clash of civilizations, and the divisive and destructive influence they can have, especially on the most vulnerable segments of society, should remain a firm objective.

The OSCE firmly believes that including the above considerations in the action plan to be elaborated by the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative, alongside the four already identified priority areas, would contribute to the overall effectiveness of the plan and ultimately of the Initiative itself.

As a regional arrangement under the terms of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, the OSCE can play a vital role in its own region by promoting its own commitments on tolerance and non-discrimination. It can also be a catalyst in its dialogue with the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation.

Indeed, both the Organization's conceptual framework and instruments have undergone constant refinement and innovation by the participating States, and in themselves may inspire broader adoption under the aegis of the UN as the primary body charged with promoting global peace and stability. In the spirit of the Charter for Co-operative Security, and conscious of the interlink between security concerns in different regions, the OSCE stands ready to share its experience with any organization concerned with promoting comprehensive and inclusive security in its region.

In conclusion, many of the values promoted by the OSCE are universal in their very nature, such as respect for diversity, human rights and tolerance. They are also at the heart of the conceptual framework behind the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative. However, although these values are universal, they cannot be said to be universally applied. The OSCE throughout its history has devoted considerable efforts to finding common ground between different States and their associated cultures, values and traditions to reach a body of commitments that are the product of a collective ownership. In the context of the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative, the Organization stands ready to continue working in this direction and help, within the limits of its mandate and resources, implement relevant recommendations contained in the forthcoming action plan to be presented to the UN Secretary General.