

Message from the Secretary General



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(OSCE/Mikhail Evstafiev)

Annual Reports are more than simply bureaucratic or public relations exercises. They provide an opportunity to weave together the threads of our diverse Organization, and to clarify its various activities and programmes.

The OSCE is a uniquely complex Organization – complex in its decentralized structure and its ambitious and ever-growing mandates, complex also in the myriad activities it undertakes across 56 countries. The 2007 Annual Report goes a long way to revealing the OSCE as it is and points toward future opportunities.

The Ministerial Council in Madrid marked the end of a challenging but very productive year. It also opened new vistas for our Organization, including a decision on future chairmanships that offers us unprecedented transparency into the OSCE's leadership through 2011. The Ministers also decided to enhance the Organization's engagement with Afghanistan, a partner country of vital importance for the security of the OSCE community. There is considerable work ahead.

In 2007, many high-level officials addressed the 56 participating States in Vienna. Speakers included H.M. King Juan Carlos I of Spain; the Lithuanian President; the Croatian and Georgian Prime Ministers; the U.S. Secretary of State; the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs; the Kazakh Secretary of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister of Culture; the German and Portuguese Ministers for Foreign Affairs (in their capacities as European Union Presidents) and many other senior representatives of participating States and international organizations.

This diverse group of leaders provided a broad range of perspectives on ongoing work in the OSCE as well as the challenges before us, thereby reaffirming the unique role of the OSCE as a forum for political dialogue in wider Europe. Such a forum is particularly essential in the context of persistent differences between States on the future of the existing regime for politico-military co-operation, debates over the implementation of OSCE human dimension commitments and discussions over how to settle the unresolved conflicts in the OSCE area.

2007 saw important milestones in the participating States' efforts to use the Organization to address new threats in innovative ways. For instance, a conference in Vienna on public-private partnership in countering terrorism cleared the way for a decision on the subject by Ministers in Madrid.

Central Asian States led the way in the economic and environmental sphere, with a conference in Dushanbe on transit transportation in the region and a major event in Tashkent on land degradation and the pollution of soil. And, of course, the Spanish Chairmanship also did much to advance the OSCE's thinking on the link between the environment and security.

Under the guidance of the Spanish Chairmanship, the participating States deepened the OSCE's dialogue on tolerance and non-discrimination, including through a high-level conference in Bucharest followed by a Chairmanship event in Cordoba.

As described in this Annual Report, the OSCE's Secretariat, Institutions, and 19 field operations worked throughout the past year

to promote a comprehensive approach to security. As ever, OSCE executive structures are here to help States help themselves in implementing OSCE commitments across the three dimensions and the OSCE's geographical area.

In 2007, OSCE Institutions continued to support the participating States in implementing their commitments across the human dimension, and in debating new ones, particularly with regard to freedom of the media. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, continued its vital work in providing States with election observation and support for the continuous consolidation of good democratic governance. In The Hague, the newly appointed High Commissioner on National Minorities, Knut Vollebaeck, hit the ground running. On the whole, strong co-operation between OSCE Institutions, the Secretariat and the field operations continued to characterize our work in 2007. This is vital for the health of the Organization and for the success of the OSCE's approach to security that cuts across dimensions.

For instance, as tasked by the 2006 Ministerial Council *Decision No. 5*, Ambassador Christian Strohal, ODIHR's director, and I drafted a report on organized crime that was presented to the Permanent Council in July. The report represented the first time that the Secretary General and the Director of ODIHR had been jointly tasked to report to the participating States. The experience was fruitful for all participating States.

At the management level, I was pleased this year to extend the application of Performance-Based Programme Budgeting to all Funds, and to see related improvements in overall programme budget planning. Participating States have recognized the importance of such measures for strengthening the OSCE's effectiveness.

Finally, 2007 saw the move of the Secretariat and the Representative on Freedom of the Media to their handsome new premises at Wallnerstrasse 6, with H.M. King Juan Carlos I and Austrian President Dr. Heinz Fischer speaking at the inauguration in November. This move bolstered the morale of all staff and provided an excellent chance to recommit ourselves to an

Organization that lives up to its full potential in facing future challenges.

The Annual Report, thus, shows that the OSCE adds up to more than the sum of its parts and that it is a vital actor for consultation, co-operation and joint work among the 56 participating States.

The 56 form a community brought together by common interests and shared values that have been defined and clarified in the course of 32 years of constant dialogue. Shared beliefs about values and security lie at the heart of all of the OSCE's undertakings. Taking these forward is a demanding job. It is also one that is exciting and worthy of all of our efforts.

*Secretary General
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