



in co-operation with



FROM CONFRONTATION TO CO-OPERATION: RESTORING CO-OPERATIVE SECURITY IN EUROPE

Berlin, 23-24 June 2016

Concept Note

Rationale

The OSCE region is facing a number of critical security challenges that are too complex for any one country or organization to tackle alone. European security is in crisis and there is a clear danger that new dividing lines are opening up in the OSCE area. The rapidly growing global insecurity adds additional risks and threats to regional security in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region. States, regional organizations and civil society actors are all searching for ways to reduce risks, remedy the confrontational relations and return to co-operation in Europe.

The OSCE plays a significant role in these efforts as a platform for inclusive security dialogue and joint action, including on issues pertaining to broader security challenges. Over the course of its existence, the OSCE has repeatedly demonstrated its enduring relevance in flexibly adapting to changing security needs in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region. The Organization's inclusiveness, impartiality and comprehensive approach to security have proved to be its key comparative advantages in responding to today's rapidly changing security environment, as clearly shown most recently by the OSCE's prompt reaction to the unfolding crisis in and around Ukraine.

Despite operational achievements on the ground, the OSCE has been struggling with paralysis at the political level. While developments in Ukraine in late 2013 and early 2014 took many by surprise, signs of a deeper crisis across Europe had been evident for some time. A growing East-West divide, divergent security perceptions and priorities, and decreasing trust and confidence were hindering consensus-based co-operation in various areas for several years. The crisis in and around Ukraine has only exacerbated existing

divisions and marked a clear retreat from aspirations towards a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community as enshrined in the Astana Commemorative Declaration to a confrontational posture and a return to Cold War rhetoric. Mistrust has reached critical levels and governments are mainly focused on short-term gains as opposed to discussing how to overcome the current stalemate, search for common ground and put European security on a more stable basis. The current situation requires engagement, leadership and commitment to strengthening mutual co-operation by all countries.

The OSCE participating States have been engaged in a strategic dialogue almost continuously since 2009, first within the Corfu Process, later through the V-to-V Dialogues and most recently within the framework of the Helsinki +40 Process launched in Dublin in December 2012. In January 2015, the OSCE Troika appointed a Panel of Eminent Persons to provide advice on how to re-consolidate European security as a common project and how to rebuild mutual trust and confidence. The Panel has produced two reports: an interim report on lessons learned for the OSCE from its engagement in Ukraine and a final report on broader issues of security in the OSCE area. Nevertheless, a gulf remains between the many ideas and proposals and their actual implementation. The worsening security situation in the OSCE region and globally makes a return to mutual co-operation and joint action more urgent than ever.

Objectives and expected outcomes

This OSCE Security Days event will contribute to a strategic dialogue on how to overcome political paralysis and different threat perceptions in order to return to co-operative security in the OSCE area. It will highlight the urgent need for re-engagement and enhancing mutual co-operation among the participating States in view of the deteriorating security situation in the OSCE region and beyond. The event is expected to generate ideas and recommendations for rebuilding trust and confidence among the OSCE participating States and jointly addressing common security challenges and threats in the OSCE space. *Given the need for dialogue and the complexity of the security situation in Europe, this OSCE Security Days meeting may become the basis for further activities dedicated to the return to a strategic security dialogue in 2016 and 2017.*

Format

The event is organized in co-operation with two well-known and highly respected German political foundations: the [Friedrich Ebert Stiftung](#) and [Konrad Adenauer Stiftung](#). Speakers will include senior officials from governments and international organizations, leading academic experts and prominent members of civil society.

On 23 June, the event will begin with a night-owl session dedicated to the topic of protecting fundamental freedoms in times of crisis. Multiple security threats in Europe and beyond are increasing a sense of uncertainty and insecurity among the European public. Governments, state institutions and regional organizations are under pressure to take effective measures to ensure public safety. Support for radical political parties and movements is growing in many European states. How can states, international institutions and civil society effectively tackle global and transnational threats and challenges without undermining fundamental freedoms and while respecting human rights and democratic values? Are we willing to give up some of our freedoms in exchange for greater security?

The main part of the conference on 24 June will be structured around four sessions:

The first session will focus on [restoring stability and predictability in the politico-military sphere](#). The current crisis in and around Ukraine has exacerbated divisions and mistrust among the OSCE participating States, including in the politico-military sphere. Military exercises are conducted with increasing frequency and often without prior notification. There has been a growing number of incidents of close military encounters. Meanwhile military-to-military dialogue is stagnating or has been suspended. In this situation there is a real potential for dangerous miscalculation and unforeseen incidents that could trigger direct military confrontation. How can military confidence be restored in times of crisis? What new confidence- and security-building measures could be devised, in particular with regard to snap military exercises and close military encounters? Can the tension between the right of sovereign states to choose their own alliances and the concept of indivisible security be reconciled? What steps and measures should be taken to dispel concerns and ensure that the legitimate security interests of all states are respected?

The second session will explore [prospects for harmonizing various integration processes within the OSCE space](#). Since the end of the Cold War, trade and investment have expanded dramatically, contributing to stability and security in the OSCE area. Many post-communist countries have joined the European Union, while others aspire to do so in the future. At the same time, some regions in the OSCE area have launched their own integration processes, such as the Eurasian Economic Union. Against the backdrop of growing East-West tensions, economic relations have become more politicized and questions of compatibility have arisen, in particular for countries that are not included in one or another integration process. Meanwhile, economic sanctions and counter-sanctions have become a visible expression of the fundamental political divisions in Europe. What can be done to prevent the (re-)emergence of camps with exclusive economic arrangements within the OSCE area? How can connectivity and dialogue between different organizations be improved? How can regional organizations help move beyond the compartmentalization of the OSCE space and remedy effects of the current crisis? What kinds of confidence-building measures could be applied in the economic sphere?

The third session will address [joint responses to global and transnational security challenges](#). The OSCE area is facing a range of complex security challenges that are multidimensional, transnational or even global, and increasingly intertwined. These challenges, which include terrorism and violent extremism, organized crime, trafficking in human beings, climate change and the recent unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants into Europe, among others, are too big for any single state to tackle on its own. How can the OSCE participating States jointly address these challenges in an effective and co-operative manner? What innovative approaches and strategies can be applied? How can governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector work together to help address these challenges?

The final session will wrap up the discussion of the day and explore [return to co-operative security in the OSCE area](#). The OSCE plays a central role in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security architecture as a platform for inclusive dialogue and joint action. Despite its operational achievements on the ground, the OSCE has been struggling with political paralysis. A deteriorating security situation and risks of new dividing lines emerging in the OSCE area jeopardize constructive co-operation among the OSCE participating States.

Rapidly growing global instability is exacerbating these developments. What steps should be taken to avoid further worsening of East-West relations and what strategies could help shift the focus away from confrontation and back to co-operation? How can trust and confidence among the OSCE participating States be restored and what role can confidence-building measures play in that respect? What measures could be used to return to constructive dialogue? How can the European security architecture be strengthened?

About the OSCE

With 57 participating States in Europe, Central Asia and North America, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is the world's largest regional security organization. Its mission is rooted in the principles and commitments contained in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, a pioneering document that contributed to the end of the Cold War. The OSCE has a comprehensive approach to security that encompasses politico-military, economic and environmental, and human aspects and that is reflected throughout the work of the Organization.

About OSCE Security Days

OSCE Security Days have served as a unique platform for enhancing the security dialogue since the initiative was launched in 2012. Security Days events aim to deepen understanding of common security challenges and generate possible solutions by stimulating informal, interactive and forward-looking debate among prominent experts from international organizations, governments, think tanks, academia, civil society, youth, and the media. Previous Security Days have focused on conventional arms control, water security, climate change, radicalization and violent extremism, the women, peace and security agenda, as well as migration.