

Walker: “KVM is Making a Difference”



OSCE/Szandelszky

OSCE verifiers on patrol in Kosovo

Although the future of Kosovo is still unclear, what is more and more evident is that the OSCE's Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) is making a significant impact on the situation in Kosovo. To quote the Head of Mission, Ambassador William Walker, “KVM is making a difference in a very positive way.”

The bright orange vehicles of the KVM are now an accepted and common sight throughout the province. Five regional centres have been established and many co-ordination or sub-centres have also been opened. The KVM's international staff now number more than 1,000 and the flow of equipment to accommodate even more verifiers is steadily increasing. Medical facilities have been established and communications systems improved.

Now that the Mission is coming up to strength, its visibility and capability are higher. This allows it to more effectively carry out its mandate all over the province. It has also been successfully engaged in a number of important activities; facilitating the release of prisoners, defusing military standoffs, and collecting information on human rights abuses.

OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebæk (who visited the region twice in January) says that due in large part to the Mission, “a humanitarian catastrophe has been avoided, although serious problems remain.” In an address to the Permanent Council on 14 January he said that “the KVM has contributed to a measure of

stability, and even more importantly, it has saved lives.”

One area where this has been evident is in prisoner exchange. On January 13 the Chairman-in-Office (who was on an official visit to the region) and the Mission were instrumental in securing the release of eight soldiers of the Yugoslav army who had been held by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) since 8 January. On 24 January the KVM negotiated the release of five Serb civilians who were held in captivity near Vucitrn. Nine ethnic Albanians were released by the Yugoslav army on the same day.

Although the situation in the province remains volatile, the very presence of the verifiers has restored some confidence,

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particularly at the local level. Mission staff are making an effort to identify the needs of local populations and to help them find solutions. For example, with KVM assistance, electricity has been restored in some areas and schools and homes have been repaired.

Human dimension activities are expanding. Human rights officers are now operating out of all Regional Centres and Co-ordination Centres. Their activities involve training the verifiers, investigating suspicious killings, looking into cases of torture and ill treatment, following-up on abductions and missing persons, monitoring freedom of movement and personal liberty and following legal proceedings. In co-operation with other international organizations, the Mission continues to monitor the plight of refugees and displaced persons and assists with humanitarian relief.

The KVM staff are winning plaudits from the international media (see Press Profile) and the international community. On returning from Kosovo, Mr. Vollebæk said that "seeing the KVM was an impressive experience."

In their daily work, the unarmed verifiers often face precarious situations. In an incident on 15 January, two verifiers sustained non-life-threatening injuries during the course of their verification duties. The incident occurred in the area of Rznice, near Decani, in western Kosovo when the convoy in which they were travelling (with two police vehicles) came under small arms fire. Ambassador Walker described the attack as

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Head of Mission, Ambassador William Walker, talks to local people in a village in Kosovo.

"intentional." The KLA later admitted to the shootings. In his address to the Permanent Council on 14 January, Mr. Vollebæk paid tribute to the KVM staff and all OSCE personnel serving in the field saying "their courage, professionalism and dedication is a source of strength to the organization."

The steadily increasing number of verifiers has allowed for a higher number and wider range of patrols. Verifiers reported many incidents during January, some of which were described as "serious violations of the cease-fire." For example, heavy fighting was reported in a number of villages in the area along the border between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and Albania on 27 and 28 January. Sometimes the KVM is able to defuse the situation, other times verifiers are unable to access the conflict area. The KVM's Chief of Opera-

tions, General John Drewienkiewicz noted that "bad things happen where we are less strong on the ground." One example came in the village of Rogovo (halfway between Prizren and Djakovica) on 29 January when 25 ethnic Albanians and one Serb policeman were killed.

The most serious incident in January, indeed since the cease-fire of October 1998, occurred in the village of Racak on 15 January. The massacre at Racak may long be remembered as a pivotal event in the conflict in Kosovo; it was certainly a defining moment for the KVM.

On 16 January KVM teams, that included human rights verifiers, went to the village of Racak (near Stimlje). In the previous days, KVM verifiers in the area had reported what appeared to be "a wholesale violation" of the cease-fire by Yugoslav army and police forces.

On arriving in Racak, KVM personnel discovered 36 bodies (later confirmed as 45), 23 of which were lying in a ditch. According to a statement made by Ambassador Walker, who visited the site, "many of the victims were elderly men, many shot at extremely close range, most shot in the front, back and top of the head." Ambassador Walker told a news conference that "I do not have the words to describe my personal revulsion, or that of all those who were with me, at the sight of what can only be described as an unspeakable atrocity... Although I am not a lawyer, from what I personally saw, I do not hesitate to describe the event as a massacre, a crime against humanity. Nor do I hesitate to

accuse the government security forces of responsibility.”

Ambassador Walker called for an investigation by the Hague International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia. This view was supported by the Chairman-in-Office, Mr. Vollebæk, who raised the matter with FRY Foreign Minister Živadin Jovanović and the head of the Hague Tribunal, Judge Louise Arbour.

In a statement issued on 16 January, Mr. Vollebæk strongly urged the FRY to put an immediate end to its military activities in Kosovo and avoid any other action that could further raise tension in the region. He expressed dismay concerning the recent upsurge in violence, which he described as “all the more regrettable in light of the restraint which on 13 January led to the release of eight Yugoslav soldiers held captive by the Kosovo Liberation Army.”

On 18 January Foreign Minister Jovanović sent a letter to Mr. Vollebæk in which he accused Ambassador Walker of “insulting the dignity and usurping

the authority of the competent State organs of the FRY.” Walker was declared *persona non grata* and “obliged to leave the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 48 hours.” This was subsequently extended for a further 24 hours.

On 19 January Mr. Vollebæk issued a statement in which he described the decision to declare Ambassador Walker *persona non grata* as “totally unacceptable and may lead to a serious escalation of the conflict in Kosovo.” He said that “the OSCE has full confidence in the KVM leadership.”

These views were echoed by the OSCE Troika ministers when they met in Vienna the next day. Foreign Ministers Vollebæk of Norway, Wolfgang Schüssel of Austria and Bronisław Geremek of Poland issued a statement in which they said that the decision to expel Walker was “totally unacceptable” and stressed that “the Yugoslav authorities must rescind their decision to expel Ambassador Walker and co-operate fully with the OSCE.” They said that

“the killings in Racak and the unwillingness of the Yugoslav leadership to co-operate with the OSCE represents a serious instance of non-compliance with UN Resolutions and with the Agreement signed between Ministers Geremek and Jovanović.”

Concerted international diplomatic pressure (including a visit to Belgrade by the Chairman-in-Office) eventually led the Yugoslav authorities to “unconditionally freeze” the expulsion order against Ambassador Walker.

However, the demand that the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia be given free access to the site of the crime was rejected. Judge Louise Arbour was turned back at the border when she tried to enter Kosovo from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with an OSCE escort, on 18 January. A Finnish forensic team, working with the OSCE, arrived on 21 January to carry out autopsies on the bodies.

The OSCE has long stressed that a durable solution to the Kosovo crisis can only be found through political means. It has therefore been supportive of the latest efforts to mediate an end to the conflict. On 1 February the Permanent Council issued a statement saying that “the OSCE stands ready to facilitate the implementation of a political settlement; to supervise free and fair elections, to help develop democratic institutions and processes, and to help protect respect for human rights of all inhabitants and communities in Kosovo.” It said that “the OSCE will be directly engaged in efforts to agree on a political settlement.”



OSCE personnel check a Serb position outside Podujevo

OSCE/Szandelszky

OSCE Chairman-in-Office Visits Balkan Capitals

The 1999 Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebæk, launched his Chairmanship with a trip to Tirana, Belgrade, Podgorica, Priština and Skopje on 9-13 January. The primary focus of the trip was the situation in Kosovo and the endeavour of the Norwegian Chairmanship to strengthen the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) and support a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

In Tirana, Mr. Vollebæk told the Albanian leadership that Albania would be on the list of priorities for the Chairmanship, and that achieving political stability was the main challenge. In meetings with President Meidani, Prime Minister Majko and Foreign Minister Milo, he emphasized that while the OSCE and other international bodies were providing key assistance, it is up to the government and the opposition to take responsibility. A sustained campaign to reduce crime and corruption is a prerequisite for international investment, economic growth and social development, he said.

In a meeting with opposition leader Sali Berisha, Mr. Vollebæk stressed the important role the opposition plays in a democracy. "No democracy can function if the political opposition refuses to participate in lawfully elected democratic institutions," he said. He said he was encouraged by Mr. Berisha's meeting with Prime Minister Majko in December and urged him to continue the dialogue and return to parliament.

Mr. Vollebæk emphasized that the situation in Kosovo represents a threat to regional stability and economic development. Without stability in Kosovo,

there can be no stability in Albania, he said. He commended the Albanian government on its policy of moderation and its initiative to forge greater unity among Kosovar Albanian leaders.

In Belgrade, the Chairman-in-Office met with President Milošević, Prime Minister Sainović and Foreign Minister Jovanović. He also had meetings with opposition leaders, members of human rights NGO's and representatives of independent media.

In his meetings with the FRY leadership, Mr. Vollebæk expressed his concern over lack of progress in reaching a political solution in Kosovo. He underlined the support of the OSCE for the political process facilitated by Ambassadors Hill and Petritsch. He also urged the FRY leadership to fully cooperate with the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission so that it may carry out its mandate.

Mr. Vollebæk also expressed his concern over human rights in Serbia. In particular, he criticized the new law on Public Information, which he said is an "affront to the right of free expression and is clearly an attempt to stifle criticism."

Mr. Vollebæk condemned hostage taking as totally unacceptable. He assured the FRY leadership that the KVM was putting all efforts into ensuring the release of the eight Yugoslav army soldiers held captive by the KLA. He expressed his satisfaction that the FRY Government had shown restraint.

During his visit to Podgorica on 11 January, Mr. Vollebæk expressed his admiration for the forward-looking approach

of the Government of Montenegro. In talks with President Djukanović, Prime Minister Vojanović and Foreign Minister Perović, Mr. Vollebæk also welcomed the progress in recent months on human rights and democratization, and offered continued OSCE/ODIHR assistance. Mr. Vollebæk said he would also favorably consider the government's request to have a branch office of KVM opened in Podgorica.

In Priština, Mr. Vollebæk met first with local FRY government officials. He then had talks with Kosovar Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova and later with KLA political representative Adem Demaci. In all of his meetings, he urged the parties to show restraint and work for a political solution. He also told the Albanian representatives that it was absolutely essential that the Kosovar Albanians reach agreement on a common negotiating team.

Also that day, Mr. Vollebæk travelled to Podejevo, the scene of a tense stand-off, where he visited both Serb and KLA positions. He later presided over the official opening of the fifth regional center in Priština.

At a press conference that afternoon, Mr. Vollebæk announced that the OSCE had managed to reach agreement with the KLA on the early release of the hostages. He also said he was impressed with the rapid establishment of KVM and the high professional quality of its staff. "It is clear to me," he said, "that KVM is indispensable in maintaining stability in Kosovo."

Mr. Vollebæk concluded his trip with a visit to the former Yugoslav Republic of

Macedonia. His first stop was the headquarters of the NATO Extraction Force, where he met with the SACUER, General Wesley Clark. He also received a thorough briefing on the Extraction Force capabilities and the "Eagle Eye" air verification mission.

In Skopje, Mr. Vollebæk held separate meetings with President Gligorov, Prime Minister Georgijevski and Foreign Minister Dimitrov. He thanked them for their agreement to host the KVCC and NATO Extraction Force on FYROM territory, which serves as an essential backup for OSCE KVM security. He also expressed his satisfaction at the conduct of the 1998 parliamentary elections and his hope that the ODIHR's recommendations for further improvements in the election law would be implemented. He commended the decision

to include representatives of the ethnic Albanian community in the government. Furthermore, he urged the government to accept the proposal tabled by the OSCE

High Commissioner on National Minorities which outlines a compromise on the education issue.



OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebæk, meets Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević in Belgrade.

Norway Begins "Challenging" Chairmanship

In his address to the Oslo Ministerial Council Meeting on 3 December 1998, the Foreign Minister of Norway, Knut Vollebæk, said that "we have no way of knowing exactly what next year has in store for the OSCE. What we do know is that the challenges will be numerous and complex."

In his first few weeks as Chairman-in-Office, Mr. Vollebæk has seen those challenges first hand. A high-profile trip to the Balkans in early January as well as the crisis in Kosovo have given him and his team a baptism of fire.

In the Balkans and elsewhere, Mr. Vollebæk says that "there is one yardstick by which all our efforts should be mea-

sured; our ability to improve the lives of ordinary people." This same theme was raised in a statement to the Storting (Parliament) on 19 November 1998 in which he said "summit meetings between military and political leaders are no longer sufficient... The organization's most important form of preventive diplomacy takes place in the field, among the people we wish to help."

Another indicator of Norway's vision for the Chairmanship came in the same speech when Mr. Vollebæk stressed a pragmatic approach to the upcoming year. He told the Parliament that "what we can accomplish in the course of only one year is naturally limited. The strategy must be to continue the work of the

previous chairmanship – putting one stone on top of another until the edifice is complete."

The four main priorities of the Norwegian Chairmanship were mapped out by Mr. Vollebæk in an address to the Permanent Council on 14 January 1999. The first and main priority is "to ensure that the OSCE responds in a timely, cohesive and determined manner to the political challenges facing us." To do this, a key objective will be to promote consensus among the 54 members of the OSCE. "We must both serve as the translator of political decisions into concrete action and be regarded as an honest broker by all parties," said Vollebæk adding that "transparency and inclusive-

ness in consultations will be crucial to our effectiveness. If we stand together and work together, conflicts can be solved, and our organization can be strengthened as an instrument for democracy, peace and stability.”

This spirit of co-operation will be essential to tackle the second priority of the Norwegian Chairmanship, namely developing the conceptual framework for the OSCE’s contribution to European security. The centre-piece of this exercise is the Document-Charter on European security. Said Vollebæk, “our aim is two-fold: to identify the tasks of the OSCE as we enter a new century, and to define the relationship between the OSCE and other organizations.”

The third priority will be “to enhance the moral authority of the OSCE as a community of values.” According to the new Chairman-in-Office, “the OSCE must be further strengthened as the central institution for promoting human rights, building democratic societies and establishing the rule of law.” He also noted that “experience has shown that failure to recognize the linguistic, cultural and religious rights of minorities is a basic cause of ethnic tension” and that “free movement of ideas, respect for others’ rights and unimpeded contact between individuals must be at the center of our preventive diplomacy.”

Vollebæk noted that “our parliamentarians can render valuable assistance to the work of the OSCE through a dialogue among themselves and with other parliamentarians, particularly in areas such as the promotion of democratic values and the rule of law.” He also highlighted the important role that non-governmental organizations can play and said that he will seek enhanced co-operation between the OSCE and the NGO com-

munity during the Norwegian chairmanship.

The economic dimension was also cited as a useful instrument. Mr. Vollebæk stressed the importance of addressing economic reform, social improvement and environmental clean-up in order “to remove the fundamental causes of popular dissatisfaction.” He said that “the OSCE must assist in drawing the attention of relevant international institutions and NGOs to the challenges we face in this area.”



OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebæk

The fourth priority will be to enhance the operational capabilities of the Organization. One means to this end suggested by the Chairman is closer co-operation between OSCE missions operating in the same region. Another is securing the Organization’s financial base. In a statement to the Norwegian Parliament in November 1998 Mr. Vollebæk said that “the overriding goal must be to bring the organization’s economic capacity into line with the tasks it is given.” He also spoke of the need of devoting more attention to the capacity of the Secretariat and other institutions. He

made it clear, however, that strengthening the organization would not come “at the expense of the leading role played by the Chairman-in-Office” or the OSCE’s “reputation for economy and rapid response.”

These resources are important as the OSCE has an increasingly heavy workload. In his address to the Permanent Council, Mr. Vollebæk made a tour d’horizon of the OSCE’s field activities. Some of the points that he raised were that in Bosnia and Herzegovina “we must demonstrate that we can gradually and successfully hand over our tasks to the authorities of the country itself.” In Central Asia “we must assist and support wherever possible in order to fulfil the expectations of the five countries and to promote the common property which is enshrined in our basic documents.” He promised to start immediately to address the so-called “frozen conflicts” in Moldova and Georgia and said that “the time has come to give new impetus to the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process.”

Concerning Ukraine, the Chairman-in-Office said that “we will define a new OSCE presence to follow the existing mandate.” A personal representative, Ambassador Oyvind Nordsletten of Norway, has been appointed with the objective of identifying areas where Ukrainian authorities and the OSCE agree that the organization can be useful in providing advice and assistance. On Belarus he noted that “many basic principles guiding the OSCE and its member states are not being fully observed” and “we need to see practical manifestations of political will to improve compliance with OSCE commitments.”

And how will Norway benefit from the Chairmanship? When looking ahead to

the Chairmanship at a seminar in October last year, Mr. Vollebæk said that “the chairmanship gives us the opportunity to take on responsibility and play a role in resolving the burning issues in today’s Europe. We can show that we have the ability to head a large organization with sensitive political tasks. Clearly, this serves Norway’s national interest.” This view was reiterated in his statement to the Norwegian Parliament

in November 1998 when he said that “through the chairmanship, we will be an important contributor to European security and will be able to prove ourselves to be a reliable partner. In my view, our willingness to take responsibility will result in enhanced co-operation with our friends and allies.”

1999 will be a challenge for Norway and for the OSCE. The Istanbul summit,

to be held on 18 and 19 November, will be a major highlight. In concluding his address to the Permanent Council on 14 January Mr. Vollebæk said to delegations that “with your support and assistance I am certain that the summit will be a strong documentation of our commitment to improve the lives of our citizens, that basic yardstick against which all our efforts should be measured.”



On 28 January, **Mr. Askar Akaev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic**, addressed the Permanent Council (PC). It was the first time that a Head of State addressed the PC. President Akaev talked about the achievements of civil peace, inter-ethnic harmony and freedom of the media in his country. He thanked the OSCE for its support and said that “the main thrust of the further development of democracy in Kyrgyzstan is support for the creation of civil society institutions and structures.” In his statement, he outlined some of the areas in which his country is playing a leading role in Central Asia; resolving the problems of refugees, establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone and encouraging regional co-operation and security. He stressed the importance of addressing the ecological aspects of security.

He stressed the importance of addressing the ecological aspects of security.

Foreign Ministers of the OSCE Troika (Minister Knut Vollebæk of Norway, Minister Wolfgang Schüssel of Austria and Minister Bronislaw Geremek of Poland) met in Vienna on 20 January, under Norwegian Chairmanship. The Secretary General also took part. The High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media were invited to the meeting. The main focus of discussion was Kosovo. The Ministers also discussed a wide range of pressing issues including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Albania, Moldova, Ukraine, Chechnya and Central Asia. Furthermore, they reviewed the status of the Document-Charter on European Security and the relationship with the OSCE’s Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.



B. Holzner/Hopi Media

Troika Foreign Ministers (from right to left) Geremek, Vollebæk, and Schüssel together with OSCE Secretary General Aragona (far left) in Vienna on 20 January.

Understanding the OSCE's Economic Dimension: Q & A with Tom Price, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

NL: What is the Economic Dimension and what is its relevance to the OSCE's comprehensive view of security?

TP: The drafters of early CSCE documents, particularly the Helsinki Final Act, recognized and insisted on the equal importance and the inter-linkage of all aspects of security. This includes a close link between human and economic rights. The right to work, the right to decent housing, the right to live in a protected environment where the air and water are reasonably pure are all basic human rights, but they have an economic, social and environmental character. The protection of rights and resources is fundamental to security. One can also see a link in terms of military security: for example, a government that has no tax base, no source of revenue from which to pay its soldiers, may have trouble honouring its commitments in the area of arms control. This is potentially destabilizing. What we are talking about in the OSCE context is a whole series of economic, social and environmental aspects of our collective security, both within a country and between countries. This, in my view, is the glue that enables us to make progress in the other dimensions.

NL: But unlike at the time when the Final Act was drafted, we now have a European security architecture with inter-locking institutions. Some people would argue that although there is an economic dimension to security, it need not be in the OSCE.

TP: In the most fundamental documents of the OSCE, it is written clearly that

economic security is an important element of the Organization's work and should be treated with as much care and vigour as other dimensions. Of course we sometimes pay attention to documents in a selective manner, and I would say that for the first 15 years of the CSCE process there was little attention paid to the economic dimension. But after the euphoria over the fall of the Berlin Wall passed, there was a sense that the transition to market economies would be neither as quick nor as easy as everyone had hoped it would be. Around the time that the CSCE became the OSCE, there was a feeling that if we didn't pay attention to the economic, social and environmental aspects of security, we wouldn't be true to our original goals and objectives and it was high time to start. Some specific economic and environmental disasters combined with the difficulties related to transition, made people re-evaluate the role and importance of the economic dimension.

NL: But then how do you explain the failure to respond to the warning signs in economic crises in Albania, for example?

TP: The collapse of the pyramid schemes in Albania was more of a symptom than a cause of the breakdown of law and order. What it shows is that we have to do more in terms of conflict prevention at the earliest stage. In the economic dimension this means working with Governments and international financial institutions to introduce programmes to explain, for example, how capitalism works. We have to focus on building

market economies and democratic institutions from the ground up. This can involve public information programmes, education in schools, and public service announcements. These kinds of things aren't going to stop conflicts next week, but they will create greater stability in the long term. That's why I have been co-operating with the Missions to introduce more economic dimension activities in their work.

NL: But what is the difference between what the OSCE does and what other organizations and institutions do in this regard?

TP: Unlike international organizations which have money and which have budgeted for and carry out assistance and development projects, we have no money for such projects. We are perceived as a relatively disinterested outside player with no particular national or commercial axe to grind. We have no "baggage"; what we do have is a tremendous amount of moral authority and access. What we are good at is building bridges between people and between institutions, for example promoting dialogue between a newly emerging private sector and the government institutions that are set up to deal with them. We have expertise in pulling together and fostering dialogue between disparate elements which very often don't trust each other. Or, for example, we work with NGOs to teach them networking skills, watch-dogging skills and advocacy skills and help to link them up with other NGOs in their own country or region which are facing similar problems. This gives them the feeling that

they are not alone, it helps create a stronger civil society, and it helps to build the kind of stable, co-operative democracies that we are trying create.

NL: Your team is so small. How do you do this?

TP: Well, it would be a lot easier if our team were bigger.

NL: What are some of the goals and achievements that you have had so far?

TP: Changes in the past year include the introduction of training for all mission members on the environmental and economic aspects of the OSCE's work. In six or seven missions now there is at least one officer who is specifically assigned to cover economic and environmental activities, so we've developed a little network in the field. There is now a

much more systematic preparation for and follow-up to the annual Economic Forum. The theme for the Forum is now chosen far in advance and preparatory events (like seminars) are held in the months leading up to the Forum in order to get people to start thinking about their objectives ahead of time. With the help of the Chairman-in-Office, we are going to start to translate some of the specific recommendations made by each of the sub-regional seminars in the economic dimension into draft decision documents for the Permanent Council to consider; where appropriate, they will be adopted. Even when not adopted they will finally generate some discussion of the economic dimension in the PC – something that has been a long-time goal.

NL: And your aspirations for the future in this post?

TP: I'd be more than happy if I felt like I succeeded completely in fulfilling my mandate, which is a very ambitious one. That involves creating, improving and maintaining links with appropriate international organizations - the organizations that have the expertise, the wealth and the technical know-how in this area. These organizations are eager for our co-operation as well, because they see us as being ideally placed to give them political impulses whereas they often see themselves as apolitical and technical. I also want to improve our links with the NGO community, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Missions, all of which are parts of my mandate. I think the Organization as whole could do a better job of translating early warning (of which there is plenty) into effective conflict prevention. That is what I see as our biggest challenge.

PRESS PROFILE



Le Monde, 28.1.

No, the observers of the OSCE in Kosovo are not useless. On the contrary, they have fulfilled their mission. They

have seen the corpses of the victims of the massacre committed in Racak on 16 January and they have issued a report. They have opened our eyes to the horror of the violence in Kosovo. Thanks to them, we are informed about it all.

Süddeutsche Zeitung, 18.1.

Politicians like to indulge in superlatives. Supporters of the Kosovo Mission like Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer have pushed it into the headlines as the biggest, most expensive and most important challenge of the OSCE. The peace operation which was agreed upon in October has been linked to hopes that the amorphous Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe would finally get a clear profile and be established as a pillar in the future security architecture of

Europe. To be sure, at the same time another superlative was being disregarded: the Kosovo operation is the most dangerous one for the OSCE so far (...) The OSCE got started in Kosovo hoping that it would grow with the task. But it looks increasingly unlikely that it will manage to cope with this Mission – organizationally, structurally and politically.

International Herald Tribune, 27.1.

Only the courageous efforts of the Kosovo Verification Mission have so far prevented a return to open warfare. Put in place to verify compliance with the Holbrooke agreement, the mission, staffed by more than 30 nations, is being loaded with the tasks that normally follow a political settlement – maintenance of the cease-fire, separation of the military forces, mediation of disputes, protection of human rights, collection of war crimes evidence, building up democratic institutions and holding municipal elections. This “mission gallop” has occurred under conditions that would not be regarded as safe for a heavily armed military force many times the size of this unarmed civilian effort, which is projected eventually to reach 1,600 “verifiers.”



News from the Field

The OSCE currently has Missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Kosovo (FRY), Latvia, Skopje (fYROM), Moldova, Tajikistan and Ukraine as well as an Assistance Group to Chechnya, a Presence in Albania and an Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus. The following are highlights from the work of some of the field operations during the past month.

Presence in Albania Continues Monitoring Activities

The OSCE Presence in Albania is continuing its observation of the Albanian Parliament, the monitoring of refugee and traffic flow on the Northern border, and the investigation of human rights cases. The Mission's Human Rights Alert Programme (HRAP) has so far received 74 cases of alleged human rights violations and is following them up. It is also involved with a number of human rights awareness projects in co-operation with NGOs. In January, the Mission also followed (and in some cases attended) meetings between Kosovar Albanians and Albanians politicians which were held in Albania. On 20 January a new Field Office was opened in Korca.

Elections Anticipated in Belarus

The OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus is following developments in the period leading up to local elections scheduled for 8 to 18 April. The Group has given the Government advice on election legislation and regulations. Parliamentary and Presidential elections are also anticipated in the near future.

Update from Bosnia

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina continues its activities in a broad spectrum of issue areas. It is closely following political develop-

ments in the country, particularly the ongoing struggle between the Sloga coalition and President Poplasen over the appointment of a Prime Minister. The Mission is following up on the implementation of past election results and beginning to implement operational plans for voter registration. Work is going ahead on designing a standardized training programme for political party observers, NGO observers and other national and international supervisors who may monitor and report on election activities.

Concerning media development, the Mission successfully completed the distribution of over 450 journalists' text books to journalist universities and programs throughout the country and is also reviewing and assessing possible support for selected independent media projects. In January, the Mission worked with local radio stations to organize radio roundtables on return issues and the new property law in the Republika Srpska.

On 29 and 30 January, a seminar was held on the subject of "Democratic Control of the Armed Forces and Security Policy." The seminar, organized by the Mission and sponsored in collaboration with the BiH Ministry of Foreign Affairs, paved the way for significant progress on reduction of military budgets, the creation of a state defence doctrine and improved mechanisms for democratic control of the military.

OSCE Centres in Central Asia are Operational

The OSCE Centres in Almaty, Ashgabad and Bishkek are now operational. Offices have been opened, staffing has been finalized and the Heads of the Centres have held their first high-level meetings with representatives of the three Governments.

Positive Beginning to New Year in Georgia on South Ossetia Issue

During the first weeks of January, there was a marked improvement in Georgian-Ossetian relations. On 9 January the first ever meeting between the heads of executive branches of power of the two sides took place in Tskhinvali (South Ossetia, Georgia). Representatives of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, the Russian Federation and North Ossetia-Alania (Russian Federation) also took part in the meeting which was described as "very positive" and "an important step in the peace process." The talks resulted in agreements to start negotiations on an Intermediary Document (on the status of South Ossetia), to be held in Vladikavkaz, as well as to initiate a session of the Joint Control Commission in the first quarter of this year. It was also agreed that work on economic rehabilitation of South Ossetia would be accelerated including energy supplies.

An upcoming meeting between the President of Georgia and the President

of North Ossetia (Russian Federation) is expected to give new impetus to the peace process. Thus the planned visit of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office in April will take place in an interesting juncture in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict.

OSCE Mission Supports the Media in Tajikistan

The OSCE Mission to Tajikistan sponsored the reissuing of a regional newspaper, Sharaf, which had closed down in the mid 1990s because of lack of funding. This independent community newspaper is the only newspaper in the Kubodion district, covering an area with 120,000 inhabitants. The newspaper is

now being printed twice a month, with articles both in the Tajik and Uzbek languages. The Austrian Government is providing financial assistance to the project. This is the second independent newspaper in Tajikistan (after Sadokat in the Shahrituz district) to be rehabilitated by the OSCE Mission. On 25 January, the OSCE Mission used these two newspapers to start an information campaign on human rights.



Recent Publications about the OSCE

Bajrektarevic, Anis, **State Communities of Southern Slavs: Constitutions, Constitutional Laws and Constitutional Acts 1918-1998**, Dr. Karl-Renner-Institut, Vienna, 1998.

Bonnen, Preben, **De Forenede Nationer – fra vision til virkelighed?**, Forlaget Modtryk, Arhus, 1999.

Gheballi, Victor-Yves, **“Le rôle de l’OSCE en Asie centrale ex-soviétique”**, *défense nationale*, November 1998, pp. 101-111.

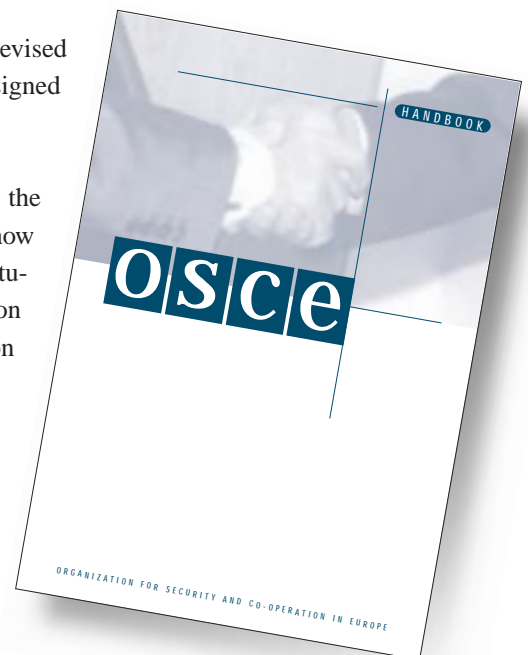
Gheballi, Victor-Yves, **“L’Idée de L’identité Paneuropéenne de la CSCE a l’OSCE”**, *Institutions Européennes et Identités Européennes*, pp. 259-272, Bruxelles: Etablissements Emile Bruylant, 1998.

Gheballi, Victor-Yves, **“The OSCE Exercise for a Security Model: Towards a Document Charter on European Security”** pp. 116-131, *The International Security Review 1999*, London: Royal United Services Institute.

Coming soon, the **OSCE Handbook**! The third edition (1999) is completely revised and updated. Through its informative content and user-friendly style, it is designed to act as a handy reference guide on all aspects of the OSCE.

The OSCE handbook explains what the Organization is and what it does, why the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) was formed and how it was transformed into the OSCE, it explains the OSCE’s structures and institutions, its field activities, its various dimensions of security and its co-operation with partner States and organizations. In short, it is a comprehensive resource on all aspects of the OSCE.

Copies of the Handbook will be distributed to the participating States. All OSCE Newsletter subscribers will receive one copy of the Handbook free of charge. For additional copies, please contact the Press and Public Information Section of the OSCE Secretariat.



REPORT from the High Commissioner on National Minorities

The Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) is located at Prinsessegracht 22, NL-2514 AP The Hague, The Netherlands, tel.: (+31-70) 312 55 00, fax: (+31-70) 363 59 10, e-mail: cscehcnm@euronet.nl

Latvia

The High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Max van der Stoel, visited Latvia from 10 to 13 January. He had discussions with the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Saeima, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Education, Chairmen and members of the Saeima Commission on Human rights and Education, leaders of political parties and the Head of the Naturalisation Board.

His talks focused on the political situation in the country after the elections of October 1998, the implementation of the recently amended Citizenship Law and the newly adopted Education Law as well as the draft State Language Law which is currently under consideration in the parliament.

European Union

On January 25 the High Commissioner met with European Commissioner Hans

van den Broek in Brussels. On January 27 he paid a visit to Bonn for consultations with the current EU presidency. He met with State Minister Verheugen of the German MFA, the Political Director and a number of senior officials of the Ministry. The discussions covered the entire range of activities of the High Commissioner.

Council of Europe

On January 26 the High Commissioner attended the High-Level "2+2" meeting between the Council of Europe and the OSCE in Strasbourg. During his visit, he also met with the Director of the Political Department and other Council of Europe officials to discuss ongoing activities of mutual concern.

Kyrgyzstan

On 28 January 1999 the High Commissioner met in Vienna with Askar Akayev, President of the Republic of Kyrgyz-

stan. Both interlocutors expressed their satisfaction about the co-operation between the Office of the HCNM and the Kyrgyz Government, aimed at strengthening the inter-ethnic stability and harmony in the Republic. They also discussed the current situation, related to inter-ethnic issues.

It was agreed that the High Commissioner will assist the Kyrgyz Government in establishing special training courses for officials at various levels and representatives of public organizations in the area of management of inter-ethnic relations and conflict prevention.

The President extended an invitation to the High Commissioner to be a guest of honor at the 5th anniversary of the Assembly of People of Kyrgyzstan, a public organization with advisory statute to the President.

UPDATE from the ODIHR

The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is located at Aleje Ujazdowskie 19, PL-00 557 Warsaw, Poland, tel.: (+48-22) 520 06 00, fax: (+48-22) 520 06 05, e-mail: office@odihr.osce.waw.pl

ELECTIONS



Kazakhstan

The ODIHR deployed a limited mission to assess the 10 January presidential election in Kazakhstan. Following amendments to the constitution of Kazakhstan in October 1998, the early date set for the election and an ODIHR needs assessment mission in November, the ODIHR decided not to send a full observation mission to the country because the pre-election conditions clearly and substantially failed to meet OSCE commitments (details in December 1998 Newsletter and OSCE press release, 3 December 1998).

An assessment mission of 15 experts was deployed from 13 December 1998 to 15 January 1999 to give a general evaluation of the election. The mission released a preliminary statement the day after the election, stating that the election process fell far short of the standards to which the Republic of Kazakhstan is committed as an OSCE participating State. Areas of particular concern included infringements on the rights of citizens to seek public office, the duration of the election campaign, obstacles to the freedom of association and assembly and access to the media and the legislative framework.

However the ODIHR was encouraged by the commitment of the government of Kazakhstan to improve election-related legislation and to implement the ODIHR's recommendations. A comprehensive report of the election will be issued in February.

Needs Assessment Mission to the Caucasus

A needs assessment mission was deployed in the Caucasus from 15 January to 1 February. The two-person mission met high level government representatives in the region, including Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Central Election Commissions, as well as representatives of partner organizations on the ground. The purpose of the mission was to begin implementation of the election-related technical assistance projects contained in the Memoranda of Understanding signed in November 1998 between the Presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and the 1998 OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Polish Foreign Minister, Bronisław Geremek.

Estonia

The ODIHR will deploy an election observation mission to Estonia to observe the 7 March Parliamentary Election. The mission will be operational from the beginning of February, and will be headed by Ambassador Michael Wygant from the United States.

Election Observation Handbook

An updated edition of the OSCE Election Observation Handbook will be available during February.

Semi-annual Report

The ODIHR report on activities in the second half of 1998 is now available in Russian from the ODIHR.

Democratization

January 1999 was largely spent consolidating plans and identifying experts for projects included in the Memoranda of Understanding between the ODIHR and the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, as well as projects in Albania, Croatia, Estonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine.

Roma/Sinti

Following a request from Ambassador Troni, Head of the OSCE Spillover Mission to Skopje, the ODIHR provided funding for the purchase and distribution of 375 copies of a Roma/Macedonian dictionary for Roma students in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It is hoped that the dictionaries will advance Roma rights, both culturally and by improving understanding between the Roma and Macedonian communities.

Joint EC/ODIHR programme for Central Asia

The European Commission and the ODIHR have signed an agreement on a joint programme for advancing human rights and democratization in Central Asia. The EC has contributed 380 000 euros to the programme of 15 technical assistance projects in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan.

REPORT from the Parliamentary Assembly

The Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is located at Rådhusstræde 1, DK-1455 Copenhagen K, Denmark, tel.: (+45-33) 32 94 00, fax: (+45-33) 32 55 05, e-mail: osce@oscepa.dk

OSCE PA Standing Committee Meets in Vienna...

On 14 and 15 January 1999, the Standing Committee of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held its winter meeting in the Hofburg Congress Center in Vienna. On the first day of the meeting, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, the OSCE Secretary General and other senior OSCE officials briefed the parliamentarians on the latest OSCE developments. The parliamentarians also heard presentations by the High Representative on National Minorities, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Coordinator for OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, and two gender issue advisers for the OSCE Secretariat and the ODIHR. All speeches were followed by a question period.

In her welcoming remarks, the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Mrs. Helle Degn, delivered an account of her activities as President and repeated her "intention to play a very supportive and constructive role within the OSCE team."

In his address to the parliamentarians, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Mr. Knut Vollebæk, recalled the vital importance of the OSCE PA. He stated that "it increases the general awareness of the work of the OSCE and renders valuable assistance to the work of the OSCE in promoting peace and stability, particularly in areas such as the promotion of democratic values and the rule of law."

As a firm believer in the parliamentary dimension of international organizations, the OSCE Secretary General, Ambassador Giancarlo Aragona, thanked the Standing Committee for giving the heads of the OSCE institutions the "opportunity to present our views but also to expose ourselves to the views of parliamentarians." He went on to say that "for us in international bureaucracies, to harness the views of parliamentarians is essential to go ahead in our work."

The Director of the ODIHR, Ambassador Gérard Stoudmann, had "only positive things to report on the cooperation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the ODIHR." In 1998, the two institutions cooperated in 10 election monitoring missions. He expressed his satisfaction that the international community was increasingly speaking with one voice, as the joint observation missions and statements demonstrate.

... and Adopts Resolutions

The opening remarks for the second day of the meeting were given by the President of the Austrian Parliament, Dr. Heinz Fischer, and by the Austrian Chancellor, Dr. Viktor Klima. The members of the Standing Committee debated and adopted a resolution on Kosovo in which they called for the cessation of any violent actions and for a solution acceptable by all parties to the conflict. They expressed their support for the deployment of the OSCE Verification Mission and the development of a dialogue aimed at restoring peace in Kosovo. They restated the will of the

Parliamentary Assembly to assist in the work of the KVM by deploying teams of parliamentarians in the field and called upon all parties to cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Finally, they indicated their support for people or groups who advocate respect for human rights and promote the development of democratic institutions and public tolerance in Serbia.

The Standing Committee also adopted a resolution aimed at developing a common strategy for the international community in election monitoring, particularly concerning the follow-up of recommendations issued by election observation missions. To that end, the resolution contained provisions for the creation, within the OSCE Parliamentary, of an ad hoc committee that would be tasked with making the necessary contacts with the representatives of the various institutions concerned by the common strategy concept and working with them to elaborate it.

Finally, the Standing Committee decided that the theme for the Eighth Annual Session of the Parliamentary Assembly, to be held in St. Petersburg from 6-10 July 1999, would be "Common Security and Democracy in the Twenty-First Century."

President Degn Visits Croatia

From 11 to 13 January 1999, OSCE PA President Helle Degn visited Croatia to observe the situation in the Republic in connection with core areas of the work

of the OSCE Mission in Croatia. In Zagreb, Mrs. Degn met with representatives of different political parties, with Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Jadranka Kosor; Minister of Interior Ivan Penić; Foreign Minister Mate Granić; Minister for European Integration Ljerka Mintas-Hodak; Minister of Justice Milan Ramljak and other government officials. President Degn also visited the Danube Region where she met with local authorities and citizens. At the end of her visit, Mrs. Degn issued a statement expressing her concerns about reconciliation and return of refugees and displaced persons, Croatian electoral legislation and the media situation. According to President Degn “for as long as up to five families leave the Danube Region every day, I think there is a real problem. I myself could witness the feelings of insecurity and uncertainty in this Region. Reconciliation committees have been established at all levels, but most of them are not functioning. Until now, there seems to be no real commitment to reconciliation.”

Meeting in Vukovar with Croat and Serb families, Mrs. Degn also witnessed how difficult it is to obtain timely action by the judiciary and other authorities in line with their rights as citizens. She indicated that “there is no doubt in my mind that without the OSCE presence in the field, the situation would be worse.” As to the electoral legislation, Mrs. Degn expressed her hope that an agreement on the necessary reforms will be reached well in advance of the next election. Finally, President Degn stated that she supports the recommendations to reform State Television that have come from the OSCE Mission in Croatia and from the Council of Europe.

President Degn’s visit to Croatia was the first in a series of extensive visits of

the OSCE PA President to ten countries where she will observe in the field the core areas of the work of OSCE Missions. Next on the programme is Central Asia where, from 12 to 20 February, she will visit Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. From 22 to 25 February, Mrs. Degn will travel to Moldova and Ukraine. She will visit Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia from 30 May to 4 June.

First Visit to Minsk of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Working Group on Belarus

The ad hoc Working Group on Belarus of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly visited Minsk from 17 to 20 January to study the political situation and to investigate the outlook for democratic transformation in Belarus. “We are very concerned that the recommendations of the OSCE have not been taken into account in the electoral law,” said the Chairman of the Parliamentary Group and former Foreign Minister of Romania, Mr. Adrian Severin (MP, Romania), speaking of the law on local elections recently adopted in Belarus. “We hope that the authorities can improve the law in order to give all sides a chance to participate freely and fairly,” he added, stressing concern over a highly critical assessment of the election law issued by the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus.

The OSCE Parliamentary Working Group focused its efforts on a number of pending constitutional and parliamentary questions in the country and met with representatives of the Presidential administration, Government and parliamentary officials, opposition representatives, members of the diplomatic corps, as well as with members of non-

governmental organizations and the media. Currently, different political forces in Belarus claim allegiance to one of two versions of a Constitution and two legislatures. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Working Group sought in its meetings the opportunity to explore avenues for compromise and cooperation between the increasingly divergent political forces in the country in order to build commonly recognizable future institutions in Belarus. The OSCE Parliamentarians asked all sides to engage in constructive dialogue.

Established on the occasion of its Annual Session in Copenhagen on 7 July 1998, the Parliamentary Assembly’s ad hoc Working Group on Belarus was charged with the tasks of playing a supportive role in the work of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus, of helping to build dialogue between political forces in the Republic, and to assist in the process of democratic development and national reconciliation. The President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Mrs. Helle Degn (MP, Denmark), appointed Mr. Severin as Chair of the Group, along with Mr. Gert Weisskirchen (MP, Germany), Mr. Kimmo Kiljunen (MP, Finland), Mrs. Nino Burjanadze (MP, Georgia) and Mr. Igor Ostash (MP, Ukraine). The Group was accompanied in Minsk by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s Director of Programmes, Mr. Eric Rudenshiold.

OSCE PA President attends Troika Meeting

President of the OSCE PA, Mrs. Helle Degn attended the meeting of the OSCE Troika, which was held in Vienna on 20 January. The President was accompanied by the Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Vitaly Evseyev, and Adviser, Mr. Harris Nielsen.

During the Troika meeting Mrs. Degn reported on the Kosovo resolution adopted by the OSCE PA Standing Committee in Vienna on 15 January. She also reported on the election monitoring by the OSCE PA in Bosnia and Herzegovina and her recent visit to Croatia. She repeated the idea of sending democracy teams to hot spots in order to help build a democratic political environment and develop political parties. She informed about her forthcoming visits to Moldova, Ukraine, and four Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. President Degn spoke about the theme at the Annual Session in St. Petersburg "Common Security and

Democracy in the 21st Century" and expressed hope that the discussions in St. Petersburg will contribute to the elaboration of the Security Charter. She informed about the OSCE PA Sub-Regional Conference to be held in Nantes next October where the Mediterranean States will play an important role and invited the CiO and other senior OSCE officials to the Annual Session in St. Petersburg.

The Presidents of the OSCE and Council of Europe Parliamentary Assemblies meet

Mrs. Helle Degn, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, met with the

new President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Lord Russell-Johnston, in Strasbourg on 27 January 1999. The two Presidents discussed the cooperation between the two Assemblies, including election monitoring and promotion of democracy in Belarus. President Degn accepted Lord Russell-Johnston's invitation to hold a meeting of the Bureaus of the two Assemblies in Paris on 5 March 1999.



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