



The OSCE in 2008: Challenges and Perspectives
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Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

Thank you for the invitation to speak before the Institute for International Relations and Political Science. It is always a pleasure to address an expert and interested audience.

Let me at the outset say, how pleased the Finnish Chairmanship is that Lithuania will chair the OSCE in 2011. The decision taken by the Ministerial Council in Madrid has opened a new horizon for the OSCE by agreeing on chairmanships for the next four years. On this basis, the Finnish Chairman-in-Office has declared readiness to develop co-operation within the framework of a 'quintet,' with current Troika members Spain and Greece, as well as future Chairmen Kazakhstan and Lithuania.

In February 2007, the President of Lithuania gave a remarkable speech to the Permanent Council in Vienna, where he underscored his personal as well as the Lithuanian people's attachment to the OSCE. In the President's words, "the vision of working together to build a Europe whole and free, which has always driven the CSCE and the OSCE, remains inspiring and unique."

We have come a long way from the difficult days of 1970's when the Helsinki Process was launched in the Finnish capital. Since then, across Europe, walls have been torn down, families have been reunited, and wars have been extinguished. The Charter of Paris in 1990 set forth a clear and ambitious vision for a New Greater Europe, and we have come a long way toward reaching this objective. We have witnessed this in Vilnius and other Baltic capitals, where these years have seen free peoples' voyage from the Soviet Union to the European Union.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The starting point of the Finnish Chairmanship is that our task is not finished.

President Adamkus drew the attention of the OSCE participating States to the *idea* that lies at the heart of the our project – this is the idea of building a united and peaceful Europe around shared values and agreed commitments. This idea remains inspiring indeed, because the job is not done.

In many parts of Europe and Eurasia, to our south as well as to our east, the nations of the OSCE are faced with economic and environmental hardship, “frozen conflicts” or limitations on their basic rights. As Helsinki and Finland once again takes centre stage in the OSCE, the foundations and mechanisms of co-operation set up in the past decades are being put to the test in many areas.

In my presentation, I wish to explore some of the challenges that the OSCE faces today before outlining the priorities of the Finnish Chairmanship.

Some of these challenges are longstanding, while others are new. None of them is easy to resolve. They will require sustained co-operation from all of the participating States and a renewed commitment to the principles that lie at the heart of our Organization.

A first challenge is to remain dedicated to the task of embedding stability in South-Eastern Europe. The importance of this task can hardly be minimized – neither can the difficulty of achieving it. Since the early 1990s, we have made great progress in

resolving the disputes that tore apart the former Yugoslavia, but much remains to be done to reinforce democratic institutions and the rule of law in parts of this region.

At the top of our agenda is the question of Kosovo.

Acting as an integral pillar of the UN effort, the OSCE has the largest operation on the ground in the region, including a presence throughout all of Kosovo's municipalities that helps to build strong local institutions rooted in OSCE values. Finland considers it vital that the OSCE continue to support the efforts to build a society in Kosovo that is structured, multi-ethnic, democratic and tolerant, and one that is committed to respect for human rights of all Kosovars.

What happens in Kosovo is not isolated. Developments in this region are putting strain on the results achieved by the hard work of the international community across South Eastern Europe, and further afield.

No less challenging than the situation in Kosovo are the conflicts that remain unresolved in Moldova and Georgia, and in Nagorno-Karabakh. The OSCE is deeply engaged in seeking resolution of the protracted conflicts in Moldova and Georgia. Talks to resolve both conflicts have floundered in the last year, and we have witnessed worrying tensions, especially in and around South Ossetia, Georgia.

The August 6th missile incident in Georgia confirmed the importance of reacting quickly to crises that erupt in and around the conflict areas. The OSCE must react rapidly to crises and work actively to prevent conflict and the use of violence. With regard to Nagorno-Karabakh, the Minsk Group Co-chairs will continue to do their utmost to assist the parties to endorse the basic principles for a peaceful settlement.

There are also new challenges to the foundations of political-military security across the OSCE area, which we had come to take for granted. Although not a party to the the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, Finland believes that the current deadlock in the negotiations concerning the future of the CFE Treaty poses serious risks to common security. The Treaty remains a cornerstone of European military security. We should seek at all costs to avoid an erosion of the treaty regime.

The next challenge that I wish to highlight concerns democratic institutions and rule of law.

Rooted in the 1975 Final Act and the Paris Charter, OSCE participating States have all agreed that democratic values must be based on the rule of law, and safeguarded by institutions designed to protect the inherent dignity of the individual. They have agreed that good governance is governance that protects fundamental freedoms, and that strong, transparent democratic institutions were necessary to allow citizens to exercise these freedoms. This consensus laid the groundwork for the historic transformation that swept through Europe at the beginning of 1990s.

The Paris Charter sets forth a vision for a new Europe founded on a shared understanding of how States should interact with their citizens. Without mincing words, the Charter declared that “We undertake to build, consolidate and strengthen democracy as the only system of government of our nations.”

This consensus on values, democratic standards and their implementation has been the cornerstone of our Organisation. However, across the OSCE area, electoral processes still see shortfalls, and election monitoring by the OSCE is itself being challenged.

The ultimate aim of OSCE election observation is to support the hosting country to enhance its democratic process. The recent observation missions in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Georgia have all produced tangible recommendations to bolster the democratic institutions of their host countries.

The election observation missions should cover all the key phases of the election process – candidate and voter registration, the electoral campaign, media coverage, complaints and appeals. The length and size of observation missions should be determined on professional grounds, in order to produce meaningful assessments and recommendations benefiting the OSCE and the observed country.

Through active bridge-building the Chairman-in-Office managed to get the parties engaged in an active dialogue but finally Russia and ODIHR were not able to come to an understanding on the terms of election observation mission to the upcoming Russian Presidential election.

If we are to achieve the vision of the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter, we will need to show sustained and patient engagement, and an unwavering commitment to the shared values that guide the OSCE. Clearly, the process is not going to be as smooth as it appeared in the early 1990s.

We should note also the rise of a range of new challenges to the security of States and societies in the OSCE area – challenges that have taken on disturbing new forms in the context of a globalising 21st century. International terrorism, trafficking in human beings, the hydra of organised crime, the rise of intolerance and radicalism in our societies – there are just a few of the new challenges facing us all.

Dear Friends,

The original vision behind the OSCE was to create a Europe that is not only free but whole and at peace with itself. We are not there yet. Building a united and peaceful Europe is a process that is set to be long and complex, requiring tireless engagement and constant debate about values and their application. The key is to keep the momentum moving, and in the right direction.

Finland stresses the importance of continuity in OSCE work. Greater confidence needs to be built among all participating States in the Organization itself. There are tensions between participating States over some of the activities of the OSCE. I already mentioned the modalities of election observation but the standing of the OSCE as an international organization has also been under debate.

In Finland's view, every international organization should review its work in order to remain relevant and useful to its membership. In this respect, Finland believes that it is important to welcome a discussion on these and other issues this year. Together,

we should work constantly to adapt the OSCE to new times and new needs, as we have done so many times before throughout the history of the Organization.

Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva stated in his inaugural speech to the Permanent Council in Vienna last month that 'reform should be pursued on the basis of evolution and not revolution.' Since 1975, the CSCE and OSCE have changed a lot; this experience shows the importance of continuous dialogue in the spirit of good will and co-operation.

Continuity should also guide OSCE activities over the longer term. The Finnish chair has extended an invitation to his colleagues from the future chairmanships of Kazakhstan and Lithuania to meet with the current Troika countries Spain, Finland and Greece in developing ideas for longer-term activities. There are many issues where 'working at five' could provide great benefits, not least in terms of planning.

Conflict prevention and crisis management are among core priorities of the Finnish Chairmanship.

In Transnistria and the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, the Chairman-in-Office will seek to reinvigorate the negotiating mechanisms and to restore real dialogue. Progress has been piecemeal and difficult and the existing negotiating mechanisms have been criticised over the years. We have to build new trust between the parties through confidence-building measures in the security as well as the economic field.

Let me highlight the actions already taken in the Transnistrian conflict. Minister Kanerva visited Ukraine and Moldova in mid-January to share views and seek ways to re-engage the parties to goal-oriented negotiations on conflict resolution. Confidence was built - we believe - and the conflict parties Moldova and Transnistria expressed their willingness to a dialogue. As a follow-up, CiO's Special Envoy, Ambassador Heikki Talvitie will travel to the region at the end of this month to facilitate the rapprochement. We hope that a meeting in the so called 5+2 format could be arranged soon.

In the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Finland will support firmly the Minsk Group Co-Chairs in their efforts towards conflict resolution. Political will, indeed even courage, is required from all parties. The OSCE stands ready to support the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Minister Kanerva will visit all the conflict areas during the first half of the year. Should possibilities arise, Special Envoy Talvitie is also prepared to work actively towards conflict resolution. Signatures on a settlement package will not be enough for peace to take root. The walls of mistrust between the parties and societies must be brought down and develop habits of sustainable co-operation.

The Finnish Chairmanship will continue also to underscore the importance of the OSCE activities in Kosovo. The mandate of the OSCE to support democratic institutions and the rule of law and to monitor human rights has not been completed in this region, to say the least. It is vital that we find the appropriate mechanism to ensure a continuing OSCE presence on the ground and in coordination with other international organizations.

The Finnish Chairmanship will also seek to bolster the OSCE role in promoting political-military security, transparency and dialogue in Europe. Controlling the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons is a case in point. The OSCE has been at the forefront of international efforts in this area since 2000 in co-operation with other organizations, especially the United Nations.

Border management and security is another priority of Finland. The Finnish government has already contributed more than half a million euros for projects to enhance the security and management of the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. In Helsinki, we have no doubts that such projects will increase the security of the whole OSCE area. Border management and security may be a growth area for the OSCE. As a Finn, I'm particularly happy to mention this in Vilnius, the capital of the country with which Finland has since 1997 been in close and fruitful assistance and training co-operation in border management.

The II Basket, the economic and environmental dimension of three fundamental pillars of the OSCE comprehensive approach to security must not be forgotten. Developing II Basket co-operation contributes to greater stability, security and prosperity, prevents conflicts and fosters reconstruction. Neglecting economic and environmental challenges and the problems arising from them may increase tensions inside and between States and regions.

The Finnish Chairmanship will focus on maritime and inland waterways co-operation as well as the challenges of land-locked countries. The theme, covering the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea as well as river and canal networks, is topical to OSCE participating States in many ways. The second preparatory seminar of the Forum will be hosted by Turkmenistan in March.

In the III Basket of the Final Act, Finland will focus on three questions related to human rights: combating trafficking in human beings, promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, in particular with regard to the Roma and Sinti people, and gender mainstreaming in all OSCE activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With all this, does Lithuania still want to Chair the OSCE? One month into 2008, Finland knows how much energy and time chairing the OSCE requires. But this short time has also confirmed how necessary and exciting it is.

There is nothing quite like the OSCE. Light in bureaucracy, without even a legal personality, at least for now, the OSCE is neither a political-military alliance nor an agency for economic development. It is instead a community of fifty-six States that stretches across much of the northern hemisphere – a community brought together by common interests and shared values.

Let us recall the vision that inspired the creation of the Helsinki Process in the 1970s. "Security is not gained by erecting fences, security is won by opening gates", said Finland's then President Urho Kekkonen in the Finlandia Hall in Helsinki. The States and peoples of the OSCE area need a forum where differences can be bridged

rather than aggravated, where dialogue is enhanced rather than neglected, and where we act in response to common necessities. The OSCE is precisely this forum.

Security means connecting States among themselves, connecting the human dimension with the economic and the political–military dimensions, and connecting the many different actors, including participating States, Partners for Co-operation, partner international organizations, civil society, NGOs, with the media, youth and the business world, whose interaction determines the overall environment in which we live. Threats to our security are complex, dynamic and trans-national. Tackling challenges such as terrorism and trafficking in human beings requires approaches that cut across the OSCE's three dimensions and make the most of the synergy between them.

The Finnish Presidency will keep this holistic and cross-dimensional approach - the three Baskets of the Final Act - strongly alive. We look forward to working successfully with Lithuania over the course of this year and through 2011 to build a more co-operative security in a united and peaceful Europe.