

TRANSFORMING THE OSCE

The author argues that the evolving international environment of the early twenty first century is producing new threats and challenges to the international community, including the OSCE, such as international terrorism, organized crime and illegal trafficking in all its forms. According to him the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) has to be better equipped for dealing with the challenges and threats of the contemporary world. The OSCE, is the largest regional security organization in the world with 55 participating states from Europe, should pursue its increasing focus on enhancing border management and security in its region. He further claims that the participating states should attempt to humanize the Organization and bring it closer to the peoples of the OSCE community, making it more responsive to their needs and expectations.

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The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is the largest regional security organization in the world with 55 participating states from Europe, Central Asia and North America, whose three decades of existence have provided us with rich experience and knowledge in terms of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. OSCE traces its youth back to the 1970s when the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) was created and served its purpose as a multilateral forum for dialogue and negotiation between East and West. Presently, the vast spectrum of issues on the OSCE agenda, as well as the large number of challenges in the contemporary realities, brings us to the threshold of clear necessities.

The world in which we live is changing at an unprecedented pace. Gone are the days of the Cold War. Countries which used to see one another as enemies are nowadays more and more united towards the same goals. These changes in the international environment need to be reflected in an adequate transformation of international and intergovernmental institutions. In its long history, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, and its successor the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, underwent a series of reforms. So we are not the first to come up with ideas for reforming the OSCE.

The landscape in Europe has been undergoing significant transformations since the fall of the Berlin Wall. The year 2004 is of particular importance, for it witnessed considerable expansions of both NATO and the European Union. The evolving international environment of the early twenty first century is producing new threats and challenges to the international community, including the OSCE, such as international terrorism, organized crime and illegal trafficking in all its forms. All of the above underscores that the reforms in OSCE are especially needed today. In view of these new realities, which are substantially different from those of 1975 when the CSCE Helsinki Process started, the OSCE needs to continue its efforts to improve its efficiency. To do this, some difficult questions must be asked. What should be the role and structure of the OSCE today? What is the most effective response of the Organization in institutional terms to the rapid changes in the international environment and the political agenda? How do current priorities correspond to actual trends and necessities in terms of geographical presence and the financial distribution of our resources? How can we make sure that the OSCE develops further as a framework for political dialogue and actions that are relevant both East and West of Vienna?

We believe that the OSCE, facing these realities, is in need of transformation. I have carefully analyzed the "Declaration," adopted on 3 July by nine of the 12 Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and I welcome the high level of interest in the work of the OSCE that this document reflected. We believe that it deserves further exchange of views on the issues that were raised by the Heads of State, including discussion of how the OSCE functions. We wish for a better thematic as well as geographical balance within the OSCE and we will continue working towards achieving it. Moreover, these efforts have already shown results in improved abilities among States to oppose terrorism and improve border security. However, the core of the OSCE's *acquis* or foundation agreements, including respect for basic human rights and freedoms, should remain untouched. We welcome any discussions with the States of Central Asia and the Caucasus on how they could benefit from OSCE's activities, and also hope to see greater involvement by the CIS States in steering the bodies of the OSCE, including the Chairmanship. Our Organization has to be better equipped for dealing with the challenges and threats of the contemporary world. Our aim should be to make the Organization more dynamic, more flexible and adaptable to the farreaching developments in

the global security picture. That is why since taking on the OSCE Chairmanship we have repeatedly underscored the need for new approaches to OSCE activities and a new vision for the future. We believe the participating states should attempt to humanize the Organization and bring it closer to the peoples of the OSCE community, making it more responsive to their needs and expectations.

We also have to address the bureaucratic deficiencies of our Organization by strengthening the political leadership. In my opinion, this could include empowering both the Chairman-in-Office and the Secretary General with additional *political* competences. The institutional memory of the Organization will be strengthened and some gaps in political continuity due to the frequent rotation of the Chairman-in-Office and the brevity of his term will be avoided. On the other hand strengthening the role of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly would make sure that the work of the institutional structures better corresponds to the interests of citizens. The parliamentary dimension is an integral part of the democratic structure of the Organization. In this regard, we could draw on the practices of other intergovernmental organizations.

In keeping with our pledge at the beginning of this year when Bulgaria assumed the OSCE Chairmanship, we have been making consistent efforts to enhance the balance between the three OSCE dimensions by increasing the activities in the politico-military as well as in the economic and environmental “baskets.”

We have to pursue the enhancement of co-operation on politico military matters. Together with other relevant international organizations, the OSCE is undertaking laudable actions to strengthen its counter terrorism capability. Increased attention has already been paid to preventing and combating terrorism in fields such as the threat of use of shoulder-fired missiles against civilian aircraft, illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, travel document security, container security, destruction of excess ammunition stockpiles, prevention of access by terrorists to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials, as well as establishing a counter-terrorism network. This is indispensable in tackling the new challenges. The recently launched Annual Security Review Conference is another helpful tool for in-depth discussions on our response to the security threats and challenges of today’s world. Our Organization should pursue its increasing focus on enhancing border management and security in its region. Consolidating the police assistance programmes also needs to be continued.

We need to have a close look at where the financial contributions of participating States are being spent and whether this reflects accurately our political priorities. What needs to be reexamined is not the level of expenditures, which is modest, but rather the priorities. We should continue to carefully assess the degree to which we are matching resources to priorities by increasing financing for areas such as counter-terrorism, anti-trafficking, border-security and management, policing, and education. A better geographical balance is necessary with respect to the economic and environmental dimension, the human dimension, as well as the related budget reallocations. It is necessary to look at the significant geographical misbalances in the allocation of the budget among different sub-regions – Europe as a whole, South Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. Almost 50 percent of the field resources go to South Eastern Europe, while only 6 percent are spent on activities in Central Asia and 15 percent in the Caucasus. These proportions have already been applied for several years. I believe that a new balance and new optimization of spending is needed. In particular, there is a necessity to shift current budget resources from OSCE field activities in the Western Balkans, which are decreasing, to the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia.

Some of the possible steps that we have proposed are to move the venue for the Economic Forum and the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting to the regions of Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus as a means of practically supporting them, encouraging their further positive democratic development and increasing their visibility. These fora would be much more beneficial for the peoples of these regions than to those of Central and Eastern Europe, who already have a charted path for development within the frameworks of the European Union and NATO.

The outreach activities are also an important element in adapting the OSCE to new realities. We are looking into ways of enhancing our ties with the ten countries that constitute the OSCE Partners for Co-operation. Our relations with Afghanistan deserve special attention. I am particularly pleased that the OSCE took a decision to send an OSCE election support team to observe the presidential elections in Afghanistan scheduled for 9 October 2004.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship will strive to reach a consensus among the participating states on these important reform issues, so that the Twelfth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, which will take place in Sofia on 6 and 7 December 2004, could open the ways to proceed along this path.