OSCE AT 45:
A New Spirit of Helsinki

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Foreword by Wolfgang F. Danspeckgruber

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The following Policy Report is a collection of viewpoints from collaborators on the Project on the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) at the Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination at Princeton University. The project offers a contribution to the regional organization's security dialogue and a forum for analyzing and evaluating emerging security challenges facing the organization and its 57 participating States and 11 Partners for Co-operation. Opinions expressed in this and all Policy Reports are those of the authors.

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FOREWORD: An Overview of the OSCE

Wolfgang F. Danspeckgruber

Since 2016, the Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination at Princeton University (LISD) has advanced research and coordinated initiatives related to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Several Liechtenstein Colloquia (LCM), private meetings, and seminars were held with the purpose of evaluating emerging security challenges facing the organization, particularly during the 2017 Austrian Chairmanship of the OSCE. Here we provide an overview of the challenges addressed by that Chairmanship—all of which the OSCE is well-positioned to address and are still relevant today—and offer a series of recommendations for future Chairmanships.

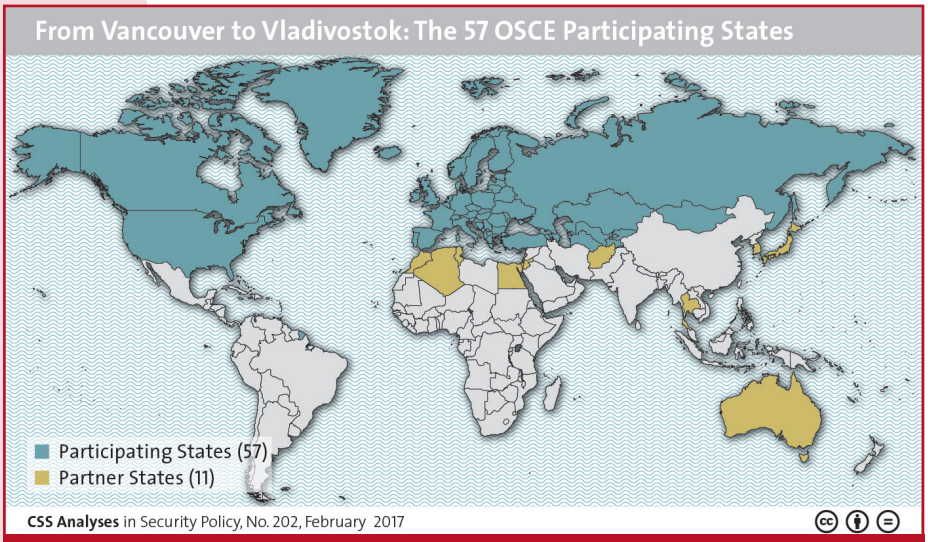

Figure 1: Map of the 57 OSCE participating states and the organization's 11 partner countries. Christian Nünlist, "The OSCE and the Future of European Security," vol. 202 (Zürich, Switzerland: Center for Security Studies (CSS), ETH Zurich, 2017), pp. 1-4.

The OSCE is the world's largest regional and intergovernmental security organization, ranging in scope from Vancouver to Vladivostok. The organization covers more than 1.3 billion people and a territory that spans most of the Northern Hemisphere. It focuses on comprehensive security in the territories of 57 participating States and 11 Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation (states maintaining privileged relations with the OSCE). The organization pursues a broad agenda in the fields of human rights, media freedom, election supervision, conflict prevention, confidence and security building measures (CSBM), socio-economic issues, democracy building, cybersecurity, and environmental security.[1]

The OSCE's origin dates back to the final phase of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), held in three phases from 1973 to 1975 in Helsinki, Finland. At this time, Europe was dealing with a new "Ostpolitik" between parts of a still-divided Germany and an emerging *détente* in a Europe separated by the Iron Curtain. The conference brought together 35 Heads of State from across all of Europe (excluding Albania and Andorra), the Soviet Union, the United States, and Canada for the

1 "Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe," OSCE, accessed September 10, 2020, https://www.osce.org/. States within the OSCE's purview include the USA and Canada, all NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and European Union member states, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Russia and all former Soviet Union States, Mongolia, the Western Balkan countries, Albania, and Belarus, and also, as partners, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Japan, Afghanistan, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

first summit of its kind since World War II. The meeting was historic as Heads of State from the then West and East Germany sat together at the same table for the first time. The meeting included members of NATO, the Warsaw Pact, and neutral and non-aligned states.[2]

The two-year preparatory process from 1973 to 1975 in Helsinki and Geneva resulted in the summit's definitive document, the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 (HFA), also known as the Helsinki Accords or Helsinki Declaration. The agreement reconfirmed the inviolability of sovereign boundaries, a peaceful resolution of differences, non-interference in domestic issues of states, and the commitment to uphold human rights. The document emphasized principles for cooperation among states, including in economic, scientific, and environmental issues. It also affirmed certain confidence building measures, such as the announcement of large military maneuvers and the extension of invitations to international military observers to monitor said maneuvers. Signatories to the so-called Helsinki Accords agreed to hold follow-up meetings in order to determine the process by which Member States could begin to implement the agreement. In the years that followed, these were held in Belgrade (1978), Madrid (1980), Helsinki (1985), and Vienna (1986).

Following the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the dismantling of the Iron Curtain in 1989, the

Figure 2: Map of Europe during the Cold War, indicating members of NATO, The Warsaw Pact and Non-aligned states. "Warsaw Pact," Encyclopedia Britannica (Encyclopedia Britannica, inc., September 10, 2020), https://www.britannica.com/event/Warsaw-Pact.

35 Participating States of the CSCE convened together again in Paris for a second summit, which resulted in the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe and elaborated on the above-mentioned HFA of 1975. The Charter further institutionalized the Conference and established the Council of Ministers and Committee of Senior Officials; a permanent Secretariat in Prague; the Conflict Prevention Centre in Vienna, and an Office for Free Elections in Warsaw, which was later renamed the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Later, in 1991, the parliamentary leaders adopted the Madrid Document and thereby established the CSCE Parliamentary Assembly. From 1991 to 1992, following the formal dissolution of the USSR, the then-CSCE

2 In 1975, NATO included Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), Luxemburg, France, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey. The Warsaw Pact (WP) included the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Romania, Poland. Neutral and Non-Aligned States included Austria, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, Albania, and Yugoslavia.

welcomed all fifteen independent republics of the former Soviet Union as new participating States in the conference.[3] Then, following the third summit of the CSCE in 1992, the then-52 CSCE participating States adopted a final document known as The Challenges of Change, which established the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) in The Hague. Subsequent summits in Helsinki (1992), Budapest (1994), Lisbon (1996), and Istanbul (1999) confirmed these commitments to security on the European continent and established the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) in Vienna in 1997. Most notably, the 4th CSCE Summit held in Budapest in December 1994 marked the official renaming of the CSCE to the OSCE on 1 January 1995. With this and the changes that followed, the OSCE had established four senior positions in the organization, including the Secretary General and three autonomous institutions: the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), the Representative on Media Freedom (RFOM), and the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

Today, the OSCE offers a unique space for a continuous and direct political dialogue on a wide range of security issues. The organization offers a platform for joint action to improve the lives of individuals and throughout communities. In order to do this, the organization implements a comprehensive approach to security that focuses on three main areas: political-military; economic and environmental; and human rights and democracy. In each area, the OSCE remains committed to placing the individual human being at the center of its concerns for security. With this, the OSCE helps bridge differences and build trust among its Member States by supporting their co-operation in conflict prevention, crisis management, economic connectivity, and post-conflict rehabilitation. Specific areas of the organization's expertise include military security; cybersecurity; conflict prevention; confidence and security building measures (CSBM); socio-economic and environmental issues; human rights; democracy-building; election supervision; and media freedom. This comprehensive approach provides necessary frameworks for concrete action on a variety of issue areas—all with support from the Secretariat and the three autonomous institutions.

The OSCE's executive structures include the Secretariat in Vienna, ODIHR in Warsaw, RFoM in Vienna, and the HCNM in The Hague. The heads of these institutions are elected for a three-year term by the Ministerial Council, which is composed of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the OSCE participating States and is the central decision-making and governing body of the Organization—dating back to the first CSCE meeting in Helsinki

3 The expansion of the CSCE occurred over time, due in part to the dissolution of three federations of States. The CSCE welcomed the addition of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in September 1991; Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan in January of 1992; Croatia, Georgia and Slovenia in March 1992; Bosnia and Herzegovina in April 1992; the Czech Republic and Slovakia in January 1993; the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in October 1995; Andorra in April 1996; and Serbia and Montenegro in November 2000, followed by the subsequent independence of Montenegro in June 2006, which would bring he number of participating States in the now-OSCE increased to 56.

in 1973. Between the annual meetings of the Ministerial Council, the Permanent Council meets on a weekly basis in Vienna and governs the day-to-day operational work of the OSCE. Delegates from throughout the organization meet regularly in plenary meetings, during which all decisions are binding and made by consensus. Members of the Permanent Council also meet in a number of informal subsidiary bodies, which includes committees on the three dimensions of the OSCE (political-military, economic and environmental, and human) as well as the Advisory Committee on Management and Finance (ACMF) and the Preparatory Committee (PrepComm). The Chairperson-in-Office (CiO) or his/her representative convenes and chairs all Permanent Council meetings.

The political, diplomatic, and practical leadership of the organization is provided by the Chairperson-in-Office and his/her team. The Chairperson-in-Office is typically the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the chosen participating State and elected by the Ministerial Council for one year. The CiO's work is central to the management of the Organization's work and the supervision of the organization's efforts regarding conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. The CiO is supported by the OSCE's Secretary-General and a so-called "Troika," from the Russian word for 'three' and which is composed of the former, incoming and current Chairperson-in-office. In 2017, Austria chaired the OSCE, followed by Italy in 2018, Slovenia in 2019, and now Albania in 2020. Sweden will hold the Chairmanship in 2021.

To further promote dialogue between participating States, the OSCE maintains a parliamentary dimension, which was originally established by the 1990 Paris Summit. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) is the largest regional parliamentary forum in the world and is recognized as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. The 323-member Assembly is based in Copenhagen and brings together lawmakers from across the OSCE area in order to strengthen OSCE institutional structures and to develop mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts. The OSCE PA meets through a variety of means and adopts yearly recommendations at the Annual Session. Several organizations, such as the European Parliament and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, have observer status in the Assembly.

Today, the OSCE maintains sixteen field operations, which work to assist host countries in implementing specific mandates that have been agreed upon by consensus of the participating States. In fact, most of the OSCE's staff and resources are deployed in the OSCE's field operations in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The operations focus primarily on creating worthwhile partnerships with local and national authorities; civil society; and international organizations. In addition, ODIHR carries out a number of election observation missions every year—each of which examines the situation before, during, and after an election. At the request of the host state, ODIHR deploys missions of around 12 members with several dozen long-term observers and several hundred short-

term observers. The work done by ODIHR on elections has become a bedrock of the OSCE's credibility in the field.

One field operation deserves special mention: the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), which was deployed on March 21, 2014. The SMM is an unarmed, civilian mission, present at all times on the ground throughout Ukraine. The SMM is a unique example of the OSCE's capacity to provide balanced, neutral on-the-ground reporting from an active conflict area. The mission's work also contributes to the efforts of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), which includes representatives from Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and leaders from certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Through its presence, the SMM has observed and reported on various aspects of violent conflict in the country, while simultaneously providing daily support to civilians who are suffering. Currently, the SMM is the largest OSCE field mission, deploying nearly 1,300 civilian monitors throughout Ukraine, who observe and issue weekly status reports on the conflict. The impact of the OSCE as a regional actor and the importance of its human approach to security is evident in said reports of the SMM and other field operations. Nevertheless, as security challenges persist and resurface over time, the OSCE's capacity to remain consistent will determine its future.

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2017 Austrian Chairmanship of the OSCE

Abstract

Austria assumed the Chairmanship of the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2017, at a time when challenges to peace and security were manifold. These challenges were exacerbated by a striking erosion of trust among its 57 participating States, which had to deal with intensifying contemporary security challenges in the OSCE Region. The spirit of genuine dialogue, constructive co-operation and sustainable confidence-building were reduced to mere principles on paper, eschewed in practice. As a traditional bridge-builder, Austria, therefore, focused its efforts to renew the "Spirit of Helsinki," in the hopes that the establishment of common ground and a process of consensual decision-making would enhance security in the OSCE area.

First, the Austrian Chairmanship managed to maintain the OSCE's mandate to prevent and defuse conflict through the established negotiating formats, while paying particular attention to alleviating the humanitarian consequences of conflict. The Chairmanship increased and intensified technical capacities and monitoring activities for the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine—as evidenced by an early extension of the SMM's mandate and its budget.

Second, Austria put particular emphasis on renewing open and frank dialogue among executive structures and participating States by creating shared ownership over the Organization, engaging in more informal talks, and highlighting the positive impact of the OSCE on-the-ground. This emphasis also facilitated the appointments to all four senior positions: the Secretary General as well as the heads of its three autonomous institutions, the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), the Representative on Media Freedom (RFOM), and the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

Third, the Austrian Chairmanship aimed to address common challenges by locating areas of potential consensus, such as positions on violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT), and going beyond traditional means of communication, negotiation and diplomacy, especially in developing the new "Structured Dialogue" on political-military issues with senior representatives from capitals.

Overall, the Austrian Chairmanship concentrated its efforts to engage fully with the OSCE's toolbox to prevent escalation and conflict in the OSCE area and establish the common security of all participating States.

Having worked within Austria's Chairmanship, we are now in a position to consolidate this experience into a list of objectives and recommendations for future Chairmanships:

1. **Foster open, transparent, and respectful dialogue among all participating States, at all levels.**
2. **Increase ownership of participating States in the OSCE, especially at the political level.**

3. **Locate and address common challenges.**
4. **Increase focus on the safety and security of the populations affected by contemporary challenges and conflicts in the OSCE area.**
5. **Pursue careful, pragmatic work on sensitive issues, including with the use of Special Envoys.**
6. **Foster direct, interactive discussions between OSCE experts and experts from other international organizations.**
7. **Include actors from civil society organizations and the private sector.**
8. **Develop the cross-dimensional approach to gender issues.**
9. **Expand the use of the Special Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office (CiO) on Youth and Security.**
10. **Maintain close communication and cooperation with the OSCE structures.**

Overall, the organization continues to offer the geographic, political and institutional platforms necessary to successfully address the challenges faced by the region—provided the necessary political will is being engaged by all.

Key words: OSCE; ODIHR; HCNM; RFOM; Chairmanship; Nagorno-Karabakh; Transdniestrian Settlement Process; SMM; Ukraine; Western Balkans; South-East Europe; Georgia; Central Asia; CVE/VERLT; Structured Dialogue; CSBMs; Cyber Security; Gender Equality; Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

The Austrian Chairmanship would not have been possible without the engagement of a dynamic team coming from diverse backgrounds, including different nationalities, with varied skills and an immeasurable dedication to OSCE values. *The views expressed in this article are those of the authors at the time of its writing. While the report has been updated where necessary, the opinions expressed do not represent the views of the Organization or necessarily of the authors in their current functions at the time of publication.*

OSCE At 45: A New Spirit Of Helsinki

In 2017, Austria assumed the Chairmanship of the OSCE at a time when its 57 participating States were facing a multitude of serious challenges to peace and security, including conflicts and crises, violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism; and an increasing lack of trust between states. Serious violations of the OSCE's principles and values, as well as a failure to implement agreements in good faith, had severely damaged relations among the participating States. This situation was further aggravated by the illegal annexation of Crimea and the related violent conflict in eastern Ukraine. In addition, signs of increasing nationalism and economic protectionism throughout the region emerged as a number of participating States were simultaneously struggling to cope with a massive influx of refugees and migrants. In most countries, people perceived radicalization and terrorism as everyday threats.

At the same time, fear and mistrust had soared, a situation which was exacerbated by a loss of trust in leaders and organizations that were responsible for ensuring security and stability. This loss of trust and confidence became a vicious cycle: feeding off of misunderstandings and misinformation, it spawned more belligerence and conflict. Moreover, the number of unresolved institutional issues within the OSCE had risen. Austria saw these challenges as substantial but not insurmountable. For this reason, we decided to take on the responsibility of holding the OSCE Chairmanship for the second time since 2000 and to steer the Organization through these challenging times.

We were convinced (and, indeed, still are) that the OSCE is an indispensable forum for addressing these and other security challenges, and for strengthening trust among States. The OSCE itself was born in a time of conflict and upheaval; it was created as a means to overcome the deep divisions between East and West. The organization was built in an attempt to counteract the prevailing ideological, zero-sum thinking and to move towards a more secure, peaceful and prosperous future, for the benefit of all. Today, we need that "Spirit of Helsinki" more than ever, given the diverging perceptions and priorities of the participating States that emanate from and are partially driven by their vastly different geopolitical contexts and economic and social situations.

In the recent past, there has been a relative decrease of substantial OSCE field missions, which has resulted in criticism of the OSCE by some as a mere "talk shop." We would argue, however, that "talk" – open, honest and constructive dialogue – is the key to improving the security situation in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area. This kind of dialogue leads to mutual understanding and facilitates the search for solutions to common problems. Promoting and enabling this kind of dialogue was a centerpiece of our Chairmanship. To that end, the OSCE provides the necessary normative, institutional and operational framework to translate the results of this dialogue into concrete action on the ground through its institutions.

Rebuilding Trust

As a traditional bridge-builder, Austria focused on fostering open and constructive dialogue in all three major dimensions: political-military; economic and environmental; and human rights and democracy. By openly addressing disagreements and differing perceptions in order to seek compromise-based solutions, our aim was to improve trust among the participating States. In this context, a Liechtenstein Colloquium (LCM) on "Rebuilding Trust – Dialogue, Interaction and Crisis Management," which was held in the Liechtenstein Garden Palace Wien in May of 2017, brought together leading experts, scholars and analysts to discuss security and cooperation with members of the OSCE Secretariat and Member States in order to address a disturbing lack of trust in three areas: between people and their governments; within societies; and between states and at the regional level.

Exploring a new initiative in this regard, Austria launched the **"Structured Dialogue"** on the current and future security challenges in the OSCE area to help overcome the climate of confrontation—an initiative which was based on the mandate provided in the 2016 Declaration on the Twentieth Anniversary of the OSCE Framework for Arms Control. The initiative was supported by high-level meetings, which took place in the framework of a newly established Informal Working Group, and focused discussions at the informal ministerial meeting in Mauerbach and the Ministerial Council in Vienna. These gatherings fostered a common understanding on how to reverse negative trends in the arms control architecture; how to work towards an environment that is conducive to reinvigorating conventional arms control and confidence and security-building measures (CSBMs); and how to revitalize cooperative security in Europe overall. An increased awareness of the Structured Dialogue and its importance was bolstered by substantial and constructive conversations in various gatherings on topics, such as threat perceptions, military doctrines and force postures, challenges to the European rules-based security order, and the role of military communication in de-escalation and risk reduction. An in-depth analysis of force postures and military exercises was, for the first time, initiated by a workshop in November of 2017 that included participation from military experts. It is clear that all participating States see this open and sincere process of dialogue as an important achievement and a significant contribution to restoring trust. There was full support for the continuation of this process.

Austria also directed attention toward topics such as cybersecurity, economic connectivity and green economies. These were identified as areas in which all participating States could cooperate more closely—with the aim of generating more confidence and, eventually, continued joint work. We also focused on the economic and environmental devastation that conflict can cause; and we aimed to protect critical infrastructure for the benefit of people living in affected, crisis-ridden areas.

In addition, we proposed platforms for genuine dialogue beyond the regular formats and informal settings, focusing instead on a results-oriented, frank exchange of views and fostering a spirit of openness, transparency

and inclusiveness. A key example is the open-ended, informal process of reflection on participation from civil society in OSCE events, which we initiated in November of 2017, in order to enlarge the OSCE's work on the human dimension of security—specifically in light of challenges brought by some States to specific civil society participants. Furthermore, we highlighted the impact of one of the key assets of the Organization – its field operations – by inviting some of the beneficiaries of OSCE assistance to attend informal meetings and present on the concrete impact of the Organization's work.

The **informal Ministerial meeting** in Mauerbach in July of 2017 was another example of the importance Austria applies to real dialogue. Discussions in Mauerbach focused not only on high-priority security issues, such as the crisis in and around Ukraine, radicalization, and the first results of the above-mentioned Structured Dialogue, but also on issues that are critical to the functioning of the Organization, including the budget and appointments to senior OSCE positions. The Chairperson-in-Office (CiO), Austria's Foreign Minister, Sebastian Kurz, regretted that the crisis of confidence was affecting not only key political issues but also impacted matters within the Organization to the detriment of its ability to function. He emphasized the need to compromise for the good of the Organization and the participating States. In particular, he criticized the protracted negotiations on the OSCE's 2017 budget – ultimately adopted on June 1, 2017 – and the delays in achieving consensus regarding the four top positions in the Organization, which left the Institutions without leadership for an extended period of time. As a result of the informal discussions among ministers in Mauerbach, the OSCE participating States were finally able to reach an agreement on all four senior appointments: the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Dialogue was also a main theme of the **Ministerial Council** in Vienna in December of 2017. The presence and active participation of a large number of ministers in the plenary sessions and approximately 100 bilateral meetings—as well as in the 16 thematic side events, which actively engaged civil society organizations—demonstrated the interest and willingness of the participating States to engage in intensive dialogue.

We believe that our intensive efforts throughout 2017 helped to improve relations between the participating States and created a more positive atmosphere within the Organization. It is clear, however, that some participating States continue to act as spoilers, blocking consensus on issues that they believe to be nationally relevant. In particular, there is a disturbing tendency to import conflict-related disagreements among some participating States into unrelated areas of OSCE work, which is to the detriment of the activities and functioning of the Organization, as well as to the overall security situation in the OSCE region. Through open-minded dialogue, and a readiness to meet each other's concerns on key issues, we might achieve a better understanding among participating States.

Figure 3: An Overview of the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine; line of contact is courtesy of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, 03 November 2016. "Ceasefire in Eastern Ukraine:" Ceasefire in Eastern Ukraine: monitoring the line of contact, December 2016. https://icspmap.eu/features/ceasefire-eastern-ukraine/.

Defusing Conflicts

Violent conflicts continue to cause a great deal of suffering, displacement and destruction in parts of the OSCE region. The impact felt by the affected population has always been of great concern to Austria. From the first days of our Chairmanship, Austria underlined the importance of conflict and crisis management, as well as humanitarian protection, through the visits of the Chairperson-in-Office (CiO) to conflict-affected areas, including Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova.

Following weeks of intensive negotiations, the Chairmanship brokered an agreement in March of 2017 on a timely renewal of the mandate for the Organization's largest field mission, the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to **Ukraine**, as well as the Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints in Gukovo and Donetsk. This included the important decision to strengthen the SMM through a substantial increase in its budget, which allowed for more monitors, increased monitoring activities, and improved technical equipment to enable 24/7 monitoring. This decision was of crucial importance for the OSCE and the SMM's role in managing the crisis. It has since allowed the Mission to better monitor the situation on the ground, while, at the same time, taking proper measures to ensure the safety and security of SMM staff.

On April 23, 2017, an armored OSCE vehicle was heavily damaged in an explosion while on a routine patrol in Luhansk in "LPR"-controlled territory. In this tragic incident, one staff member (a paramedic) was killed and two monitors were injured. The Chairmanship called a meeting of participating States on April 24, 2017, in order to inform them about the events, in addition to another special Permanent Council meeting on April 27, 2017. During the latter, participating States adopted a declaration of support to the SMM that called for a swift, thorough and impartial investigation into the incident and demanded that all those responsible be held

accountable. The Chairmanship subsequently instructed the OSCE Secretary General to initiate an independent, forensic post-blast investigation. An internal investigation was also conducted by the OSCE, which led to a number of recommendations to improve the operational planning and security measures for patrols. At the request of the OSCE, the Independent Forensic Investigation (IFI) team was assembled and deployed. The International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission issued a report on the tragic incident in September of 2017. The IFI conducted a post-blast, forensic investigation and technical assessment which found that the SMM was most likely not the intended target of the mine. The Chairmanship subsequently tasked the SMM Chief Monitor with drafting and implementing a response plan based on the results of the two reports.

Improving **the humanitarian situation in crisis and conflict areas** was another key priority for the Austrian Chairmanship. In late August, the Chairperson-in-Office (CiO), Austria's Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz, published an article drawing attention to the acute environmental threats to security in Donbas as a result of the shelling and destruction of industrial complexes, chemical factories, water treatment plants, and coal mines—especially when such threats are coupled with the accompanying risks to the population posed by repeated loss of water, electricity and heat. Under the auspices of the Trilateral Contact Group—the Special Representative and Chairperson of which is appointed by the Chairmanship—senior representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE all reached an agreement regarding limited safety zones near selected installations. Austria kept developments and challenges in the crisis, particularly regarding the humanitarian situation, high on the organization's agenda by calling for a number of events (retreats, briefings and informal meetings) throughout the year, which would include the participation of the Special Representative and key SMM staff, and by pursuing a Ministerial Council decision on the crisis in and around Ukraine.

Regarding the humanitarian situation resulting from the aftermath of the 2008 war in **Georgia**, the Chairmanship engaged in high-level discussions with the authorities in Tbilisi and supported an expert workshop on environmental challenges in the Black Sea region in March of 2017. This workshop had a dual purpose: 1) to prevent ecological damage in the region, and 2) to build confidence among all sides involved in facilitating a peaceful settlement of the conflict. In addition, the CiO visited a camp for internally displaced persons and addressed the participants of an Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) meeting in Ergneti, Georgia, further raising awareness of the humanitarian situation of the local population. He underlined the Chairmanship's commitment to prioritize efforts to resolve the conflict and to strengthen dialogue and confidence-building measures.

Regarding the **Transdniestrian settlement process**, the Chairmanship intensively used the expert working groups to find technical solutions to core issues of common concern. This approach led to progress on the freedom of movement for people, goods and services, which was achieved through the ground-

breaking decision by all involved sides to open the bridge at Gura Bicului-Bychok for civilian traffic. The opening of this bridge on November 18, 2017, generated new momentum and led to a formal meeting of the 5+2 negotiating format in Vienna from November 27-28, 2017. In close cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Moldova and other 5+2 partners, Austria was able to put a number of complex topics back on the agenda for discussion and establish a new and active rhythm of work at all levels of the negotiation process. These historic agreements created a new dynamic in the associated negotiations and fostered immediate and tangible improvements in the lives of the local populations on both sides. It is important to continue this results-oriented approach, which was confirmed in a consensus declaration at the Ministerial Council in Vienna.

The situation in **Nagorno-Karabakh** remained tense in 2017, with disagreements between the involved sides negatively impacting different aspects of the OSCE work, most notably the operation of the OSCE Office in Yerevan. Despite the intensive efforts of the Chairmanship, including interventions by the Chairperson-in-Office and the former Federal President of Austria, Heinz Fischer, it was impossible to reach a consensus on the renewal of the mandate of the Office in Yerevan. The Mission, therefore, had to close in August. Subsequently, a new project-based cooperation plan was developed between the OSCE and Armenia.

Preventing And Countering Terrorism And "VERLT"

In 2016, terrorist attacks in OSCE participating States caused more than one thousand deaths. Given the significant threat posed to all participating States by the violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT, the Chairmanship appointed, for the first time, an OSCE Special Representative on Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism: Professor Peter Neumann of King's College London. We had two goals in mind: 1 to raise the profile of this issue within the Organization, and 2 to better harness the OSCE's capabilities to combat this phenomenon.

To those ends, and in preparation for our Chairmanship, we organized a series of regional workshops with young experts in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Black Sea region, the Mediterranean region, and Western Europe. Austria also brought together more than 500 participants together for an international counter-terrorism conference in May 2016 and engaged Foreign Ministers from across the OSCE area in a substantive discussion on this issue. This meeting was followed by a high-ranking Mediterranean Conference in Vienna in October 2016, held by the Austrian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group, which dealt with issues of radicalization and migration from the perspective of young people.

Through these and other discussions, the Chairmanship's Special Representative, Peter Neumann, prepared recommendations and compiled best-practice models and

lessons learned in the OSCE region, which was presented to the participating States in September. The study would assist States in combating this phenomenon and strengthen the OSCE as a networking hub. Included among its recommendations is the need to capitalize on the OSCE's local presence in strategically important regions such as South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Implementing these proposals would strengthen the OSCE's capability and enable the Organization to make a more effective contribution to countering VERLT in its participating States. Austria subsequently provided €250,000 to ensure the sustainability of the OSCE's efforts in this area and to develop a handbook to assist participating States on countering violent radicalization.

Strengthening The Organization

Austria engaged with OSCE **field operations** and their respective host countries to ensure strong ownership in the missions' work, with a particular focus on the impact and results of agreed-upon priorities for reform. At the request of the respective host countries, the Austrian Chairmanship successfully negotiated the adaptation and renewal of the mandates of two field operations, namely in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, transforming those two field operations into the Programme Office in Bishkek and the Programme Office in Dushanbe, respectively. Through the appointment of Ambassador Markus Müller (CH) as Special Envoy of the Chairmanship, and the strong engagement of the relevant authorities, the host countries took on more ownership of their work with the OSCE.

The OSCE developed a rapid response to the political crisis and the 27 April Parliament attack in the former Yugoslav Republic of **Macedonia**. With the guidance and support of the Chairmanship, this response demonstrated the Organization's ability to respond to evolving situations and contribute positively in a comprehensive, coordinated manner. It also demonstrated the OSCE's capacity to assist a participating State with defusing tensions and initiating a long-term resolution to underlying challenges. Through the fact-finding mission of a Special Envoy, we could fully employ the OSCE's toolbox in order to defuse tensions, refocus programs on free media and a strong Parliament, and support dialogue among participating States.

The Chairmanship promoted the use of the OSCE and its instruments, particularly the autonomous institutions and field operations. Furthermore, it overcame numerous political obstacles in order to ensure that the Organization has the means necessary to carry out its mandate. The Chairmanship overcame these obstacles by, above all, brokering an agreement on the **Unified Budget** for 2017 and by building consensus on the new leadership of the OSCE and its institutions. Austria also facilitated discussions on a **revised scale of contributions**. Despite intensive consultations, a compromise-based solution that was supported by the vast majority of participating States did not reach a consensus before the end of the year. Nevertheless, Austria will continue to advocate for a strong OSCE that is able to deliver on its mandate and fulfil its comprehensive approach to security, which is

in line with the increasing demand for OSCE engagement from participating States. This vision requires adequate financial and human resources.

Among the key challenges faced by the Austrian Chairmanship were the **appointments of a new OSCE Secretary-General and new Heads of the three Institutions** (High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), and Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)). This unique situation, in which all four senior staff positions were to be filled at the same time, was of the utmost priority to the Chairmanship in the first half of the year. With the valuable support of a "Group of Friends," the Chairmanship conducted an inclusive and intensive consultation process with participating States, both in Vienna and in other capitals. These consultations took place against the background of the informal hearings of candidates in March (ODIHR Director and OSCE Secretary General candidates) and in April (additional RFoM candidates). The four appointments were discussed extensively—each on their own merits—at the level of the Preparatory Committee in June and July. Finally, on the basis of these consultations and discussions, a political understanding on all four positions was reached at the Ministerial level at the informal meeting of OSCE Foreign Ministers in Mauerbach on July 11, 2017. The decision was formalized at a special Permanent Council meeting on July 12, 2017 and confirmed through a silent procedure; the four Ministerial Council decisions became effective on July 18, 2017. The agreement on these appointments marked a crucial milestone, which ensured the functionality of the OSCE as a whole, and the Chairmanship's efforts in this regard.

Additional key challenges for Austria were facilitating consensus on the **budget** of the organization and on the outstanding issue regarding a new scale of contributions. Budget negotiations lasted a full nine months without addressing any major revisions and thus delayed the adoption of the 2017 budget until June 1, 2017. This unprecedented delay led to uncertainties in the planning and implementation of programmes and activities in all OSCE executive structures. Moreover, the continued trend of adopting strict zero-nominal growth budgets has begun to negatively affect the substance of the Organization. This situation will only become more acute with time. The same is true for the discussions surrounding the new **scale of contributions** to the Organization. Despite intensive efforts of the Austrian Chair of the Informal Working Group on Scales, no consensus could be reached on a decision by the December 31, 2017 deadline. Unfortunately, the participating States did not demonstrate a willingness to make the compromises necessary on this issue in order to achieve a sustainable result that provides a real foundation for the work of the OSCE in years that followed.

The **legal status** of the OSCE continued to be a focus of the Austrian Chairmanship in 2017. Special Advisor Ambassador Helmut Tichy chaired three meetings of the Informal Working Group on strengthening the legal framework of the OSCE. States came just short of a solution that would grant international

legal personality to the OSCE in accordance with the four options discussed in the Informal Working Group. Thus, participating States explored ways to enhance the legal status of the OSCE through domestic legislation and/or through bilateral agreements with the OSCE, as well as by finalizing an agreement on the legal status, privileges and immunities of the OSCE between interested participating States. An extended meeting of the Informal Working Group in July of 2017 allowed for intensified discussions among delegations and with legal experts in the field on the practical implications for field operations. Furthermore, a Headquarters Agreement between Austria and the OSCE was signed in June of 2017 and functioned as a clear recognition by Austria that the OSCE enjoys international legal personality based on the grounds of customary international law. Poland followed suit by finalizing a host country agreement with the ODIHR.

The Political-Military Dimension

In light of the broad range of challenges to security and stability in the OSCE region and the Chairmanship's overall objective to rebuild trust and foster dialogue, we felt that the already dense calendar of regular meetings of the Forum for Security Co-operation required even more focus. So, in addition to the detailed exchange of views offered by the weekly meetings of the Forum, Austria organized a concerted effort to focus on current and future perspectives on confidence and security-building measures (CSBMs). This included an intersessional dialogue on military doctrines, as well as a series of three breakout workshops on CSBMs to foster more frequent, direct, military-to-military contacts and provide an informal platform for discussing current gaps and shortcomings of the existing CSBM regime. In addition, three political-military retreats were held, including one in June of 2017, in order to demonstrate the conduct of a concrete evaluation visit to interested delegations—within in the context of Chapter IX of the Vienna Document 2011.

While these events, unfortunately, did not lead to the modernization of the Vienna Document which is pursued by most participating States, they prompted an open exchange of different perceptions, approaches, and suggestions. They also fed into the Structured Dialogue on security challenges. In a side event on the margins of the Ministerial Council, Austria presented a compilation of the different views expressed during these events, as well as elements of common ground, which could be used as a foundation for continued work.

The Economic And Environmental Dimension

The Chairmanship made concerted efforts to intensify work in this second dimension by building on the efforts of previous Chairmanships, with a particular focus on connectivity and good governance. The Chairmanship emphasized the links between economic participation and cooperation in the environmental sphere. The 25th **Economic and Environmental Forum** was held under the motto "Greening the Economy and Building Partnerships for Security in the OSCE Region." The Forum explored possibilities for overcoming economic divisions and providing an impulse for a sustainable, green economy. The Forum's success (including the

preparatory meetings in Vienna and Astana and the final conference in Prague) further enhanced the significance of this dimension. A genuine, active dialogue between participants was fostered by the creation of a new discussion format whereby parallel meetings of Informal Working Groups gather during the preparatory meetings. The annual Economic and Environmental Implementation Meeting in October focused, in particular, on environmental and energy topics. Unfortunately, it was not possible to secure an agreement by the Ministerial Council in this area; however, the Chairmanship, together with Kazakhstan as the Chair of the Economic and Environmental Committee (EEC), issued a declaration recognizing the progress made in 2017 and highlighting areas of possible future consensus.

The Austrian Chairmanship was inspired by the 2015 report of the Panel of Eminent Persons and decided to take up the topic of strengthening economic connectivity as one facet of the Chairmanship's overall effort to re-establish cooperative security. In January, at the first preparatory meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum, Austria called for an open and taboo-free discussion among relevant organizations active in this field and the participating States and highlighted the benefits of improving economic connectivity. Not only can economic connectivity increase economic prosperity and help combat corruption, but it can also increase economic participation of youth and other vulnerable groups, which can also contribute to preventing radicalization. In addition, many participants recognized that economic connectivity in conflict regions can improve the living standards of the affected populations, all the while helping to restore trust. Immediately following this meeting, the Austrian Chairmanship held a **business conference** to promote networking and tangible cooperation on green technology and ICT among representatives of the business sector and government officials in the OSCE area.

Together with the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies and supported by the Liechtenstein Institute on Self Determination at Princeton University, the Province of Upper Austria, the City of Linz, the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, previous Chairmanships (Germany, Serbia and Switzerland) and the incoming Chairmanship of Italy, the Austrian Chairmanship held a **high-level academic conference** "Towards the Vision of a Common Economic Space from Vancouver to Vladivostok: Connectivity, Trade and Economic Cooperation." Approximately 150 representatives from participating States, businesses, media and academia discussed a number of forward-looking issues (including the effects of digitalization on trade and connectivity; the role of China in the development of Eurasian transport infrastructure; etc.). This event was an important milestone in the Chairmanship's efforts to strengthen the second dimension. Following the conference, Austria hosted the first-ever ambassadorial retreat devoted to the second dimension. All of these discussions contributed to the Ministerial Council decision on promoting economic participation that was adopted in Vienna in December of 2017.

The Human Dimension

The human dimension remained at the core of OSCE work in 2017 despite divergent perceptions and priorities among participating States. The Chairmanship focused on bringing participating States and civil society together to discuss key issues such as freedom of the media, human trafficking, tolerance and non-discrimination, gender equality, youth, rule of law, and freedom of religion or belief. Austria advocated for a consistent practice of human rights "mainstreaming" within the OSCE and across all of the activities and dimensions of the Organization, including in the fight against terrorism and VERLT. Through inclusive and transparent discussions at both expert and political levels with participating States, the Chairmanship was able to secure an agreement on a balanced work programme for 2017. The Austrian Chairmanship expended time and energy to ensure that regular human dimension events, most importantly the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, could take place successfully.

Austria promoted more effective and cooperative responses to challenges in the area of **media freedom** with two focused events on Media Freedom in the Western Balkans in February of 2017 and on Internet Freedom in October of 2017. These events highlighted the valuable work of the OSCE field operations and produced a number of actionable recommendations to improve media freedom in the participating States.

The topic of **gender** was mainstreamed throughout all Chairmanship events. The Austrian Chairmanship additionally organized a number of special events on gender-related topics, including the Second Gender Equality Review Conference, and a special conference on "The Gender Dimension of Internal Displacement" in December of 2017, the aim of which was to identify and address particular problems faced by internally displaced women and girls. The discussions were informed by expert presentations and practical experiences of participating States, international organizations, OSCE structures, academic establishments and NGOs active in the field.

Despite an improved atmosphere in human dimension meetings and discussions, agreement on any Ministerial Council decisions on the human dimension proved, once again, to be impossible. In addition, pressure on OSCE institutions continues to increase. The Austrian Chairmanship made a conscientious effort to facilitate consensus on a decision regarding intolerance and non-discrimination; although the final draft garnered broad agreement, ultimately, it could not bridge the deep divisions between participating States on this issue. On **cybersecurity**, a substantial Ministerial Council decision was adopted, with the goal of strengthening the relevant Working Group and the OSCE Secretariat's work in capacity-building, as well as general OSCE activities in the cybersecurity field. This decision was a significant achievement, as it was the only relevant multilateral agreement regarding the strengthening of international cooperation and security in this area adopted worldwide in 2017.

Outlook And Advice To Subsequent Chairmanships

Against this backdrop of intense consultations, meetings, and operational activities, the Austrian Chairmanship conducted initiatives and implemented approaches that generated positive outcomes in the years that followed. In the same vein, Austria's Chairmanship benefitted from the work of previous Chairmanships. This dynamic has served as a source of encouragement for longer-term cooperation among subsequent Chairmanships, beyond the institutionalized roles of the "Troika," which includes the former, current and incoming Chairmanships. This is particularly noteworthy as the role of the OSCE Chair—and the accompanying expectations—are considerably more important than in other international organizations.

All in all, no one needs to reinvent the wheel. Rather, we should continue to focus on the vast OSCE body of principles and commitments, protect them and strengthen them. This holds true for all OSCE states, but especially for the Chairmanship. Therefore, we offer here a few of the most relevant factors that we feel were not only significant for Austria's Chairmanship, but are also important for ensuring the success of future Chairmanships:

- **Continue efforts to foster open, transparent, and respectful dialogue.** It is a mistake to think that we can demonize 'the other' and reject cooperation without damaging our own security. It is more important than ever to keep channels of communication open at all levels, and to enhance contacts between governments, civil society, academia and media. They all have a stake in the outcomes we seek and have perspectives and ideas to contribute therein. The Structured Dialogue on current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area is a vital example of this impetus. Honest dialogue is the only way to overcome the current stalemate and address diverging perspectives and priorities – in fact, diverging views do foster good dialogue and the search for convergence.

- **Increase ownership of participating States in the OSCE.** The Austrian Chairmanship conducted intensive outreach to countries hosting field operations, as well as those who expressed concerns about the functioning of the Organization (such as the open-ended dialogue on civil society participation at OSCE events). Continuous battles over funding for the Organization and the persistent violations of OSCE principles and values show, however, that efforts must be intensified. We need a renewed commitment by participating States to respect the fundamental principles and values of this organization. This Organization needs the full engagement and support – political and financial – of each and every participating State—with the recognition of the simple fact that most challenges to security in the region can only be tackled successfully together. Hence, the Austrian Chairmanship engaged participating States as Friends of the Chairmanship in various processes

in order to foster a sentiment of ownership for the Organization, which all 57 participating States should aim to protect.

- **Focus on addressing common challenges.** Participating States engage most enthusiastically when they see a direct relevance to their priorities and needs. The Austrian Chairmanship emphasized a common approach to the major internal security challenges posed by increasing threats of terrorism and growing radicalization, especially of young people.

- **Increase focus on the safety and security of the populations affected by conflict in the OSCE area.** We must remember that there are people living in the conflict areas who continue to suffer gravely and on a daily basis. This Organization needs to credibly demonstrate that it makes a positive difference on-the-ground in people's daily lives. This will also help counteract citizens' increasing loss of trust towards State institutions and international organizations, both of which are meant to safeguard peace, security, and values. We, therefore, believe that future Chairmanships should continue to highlight the concrete impact of the OSCE family's work on-the-ground in the relevant fora.

- **Continue careful, pragmatic work on sensitive issues in order to get better results rather than through military work alone.** This is not a call to compromise on principles, but rather a call to actively look for areas in which the Organization can build confidence between and within participating States on controversial issues.

- **Foster direct, interactive discussions between OSCE experts and experts from other international organizations.** For example, the UN Group of Governmental Experts on Information Security ensured participation in the Informal Working Group on PC.DEC 1039, while the Chairmanship held side events in New York on the margins of the UN Women's Rights Commission in March and the Security Council in October; these concrete initiatives—in addition to institutionalized contacts—helped deepen ties with other international organizations and strengthen the foundation for the OSCE's work. It became obvious that the OSCE serves as a unique forum for dialogue with substantial convening power.

- **Include actors from the private sector to foster real progress.** For instance, the Internet Freedom Conference in October of 2017, which was held with the participation of representatives from the media, internet intermediaries, academia and civil society, generated a number of tangible recommendations that promoted real progress on one of the most challenging aspects of freedom of expression.

- **Use a cross-dimensional approach to gender issues**. This enabled the participating States to address a wide range of gender-related topics

(i.e. women's inclusion in all phases of the conflict cycle, activities related to UNSC Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and violence against women) from a new perspective, thereby generating new insights on well-known topics.

- **Appointment of five Special Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office on Youth and Security**. These appointments enabled the inclusion of a youth perspective in a uniquely broad range of activities: They advised the Chairmanship on youth issues; voiced the views of young people on issues, such as preventing and countering radicalization and terrorism, migration, human rights, political participation and cybersecurity at OSCE events; and championed the concerns of young people throughout the OSCE region.

- **Close communication and cooperation with the OSCE structures.** The Chairmanship benefitted from the unparalleled expertise of the OSCE staff in the Secretariat, institutions and field operations, and was able to capitalize on direct channels of communication in order to respond efficiently and effectively to challenges.

Overall, the organization has an expansive and unique platform, which includes a normative framework; institutional mechanisms within the Permanent Council and the Secretariat in Vienna; the three autonomous Institutions in The Hague, Warsaw and Vienna; 16 field operations; and the Parliamentary Assembly, with its secretariat in Copenhagen – all of which work in tandem with the organization's concrete activities across the region. This structure has proven to be immensely valuable in ensuring the necessary minimum cooperative effort for the wider OSCE region. Thus, Austria will continue to foster stronger engagement, ownership and leadership in the spirit of our 2017 Chairmanship.

One can say with confidence that the subsequent Chairmanships of Italy (2018), Slovakia (2019) and the current Chairmanship of Albania have implemented their programs and initiatives along similar lines. At the same time, the substantive challenges have only increased, while the rules-based multilateral order has eroded globally, affecting the OSCE and its functions. Ultimately, it is up to each OSCE participating States to muster the necessary political will to engage, contribute, and benefit from the organization's unique set of normative, institutional and operational frameworks. The well-being of more than one billion people depends on the functionality of the world's largest regional security organization.

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