

Anselm Skuhra/Michael Merlingen

## The Austrian OSCE Chairmanship - A Retrospective View

### *The Institution of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office*

At the Helsinki Summit in 1992, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office's function and tasks were institutionalized and stated more precisely. According to the decisions passed there, he is responsible for the co-ordination of and consultation on current OSCE business. In his activities as the Chairman-in-Office, the foreign minister of the chairing country is assisted by his predecessor and his successor; together they constitute the OSCE Troika.<sup>1</sup> The Chairman-in-Office has the authority to appoint Personal Representatives as well as the right to nominate Heads of Mission. In addition, he can recommend the formation of *ad hoc* steering groups. In carrying out his functions, the Chair has the support of the OSCE Secretary General and the Secretariat based in Vienna. However, it is just as important that he has excellent co-operation with OSCE institutions like the Parliamentary Assembly, the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

The first country to be entrusted with the Chairmanship was Germany from June 1991 to January 1992. It was followed by the Czechoslovak Republic, who held the Chair for a period of one year which since then has become the customary time frame. The foreign ministers of both countries limited themselves more or less to representative and ceremonial activities. Beginning with the active Swedish Chairmanship in 1993, the Chair has endeavoured to set its own accents and take on a leadership role. Especially the small and medium-sized states like Sweden, Hungary, Switzerland, Denmark, Poland, Norway, Romania, and also Austria were active in this function.

Originally, the OSCE was primarily a *forum* organization in which the participating States exchanged information and conducted negotiations. During the nineties, it developed increasingly into a *service* organization<sup>2</sup> actively taking on responsibilities in the area of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation and it also became rela-

---

1 Cf. CSCE Helsinki Document 1992: The Challenges of Change, Helsinki, 10 July 1992, in: Arie Bloed (Ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Analysis and Basic Documents, 1972-1993*, Dordrecht/Boston/London 1993, pp. 701-777, here: pp. 712-713.

2 For a differentiation between *forum organization* and *service organization* cf. Robert W. Cox/Harold J. Jacobson, *The Framework for Inquiry*, in: Robert W. Cox/Harold J. Jacobson (Eds.), *The Anatomy of Influence: Decision Making in International Organizations*, New Haven/Conn. 1973, pp. 5-6.

tively institutionalized.<sup>3</sup> However, the crisis occurring at the end of the year 2000 seems to have brought these trends to an end, at least for the time being.

### *Austria Applies for the Chairmanship*

In its foreign policy, Austria as a neutral state had attached great importance to the CSCE process since its origins in 1975. This process provided a multilateral forum for negotiation in which non-aligned small and medium-sized states were able to introduce their ideas on security, stability and peace in Europe. From 1986 to 1989, Vienna was the location of the third CSCE follow-up meeting. After 1989, the CSCE/OSCE played an important role in reshaping the European political order. While before 1989, the politico-military dimension took precedence, thereafter the "human dimension" of the "third basket" - embracing human rights, democracy, the rule of law and minority rights - moved into the foreground. Since 1991, Vienna has been the seat of the Conflict Prevention Centre and in 1993 the Secretariat and the Secretary General also moved to Vienna. Since then, Austria has been making additional expenditures by assuming rental costs and making conference rooms available.

Already in 1995, Austria initially considered applying for the OSCE Chairmanship. First however, during the second half of 1998, Austrian diplomats were faced with the unique challenge of the EU Presidency. After its relatively successful conclusion, Austria applied for the OSCE Chairmanship at the OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting in Oslo on 3 December 1998 and was elected unanimously. However, in contrast to the situation since then, no other candidates were considered during the preliminary talks. There were three reasons specified why Austria applied for the OSCE Chairmanship: *First*, it had the wish to express its solidarity with the goals of security and stability in Europe. *Second*, it wanted to make an active contribution to conflict prevention in Europe. And a *third* reason, indirectly related to the OSCE, had to do with long-standing efforts to promote Vienna as a location for international organizations. These reasons had been derived from Austrian foreign policy up until that time and found broad support in Parliament.<sup>4</sup>

---

3 For the term *institutionalization* in international politics see Robert O. Keohane, *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory*, Boulder/Col. 1989, pp. 4-5.

4 Cf. Jutta Stefan-Bastl, Key Note Address, in: Diplomatic Academy (Ed.), *OSCE-Seminar: Lessons Learned During the Austrian Chairmanship - A Look Forward*, Vienna, Special Report 1/2001 (23 February 2001), p. 3. Ambassador Stefan-Bastl was the Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council during the year 2000.

### *Goals of the Austrian Chair*

The then Austrian Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schüssel stated on 18 November 1999 that the programme of the Austrian Chair was still in the preparatory stages, but there would definitely be a geographical focus on the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia and there would be efforts to implement the decisions of the Istanbul Summit.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, in a press statement on 27 December 1999, Foreign Minister Schüssel underlined the necessity to cooperate closely with the EU Presidency. Above all, he emphasized the human dimension of security policy and the reinforcement of civil societies. In his inaugural speech on 13 January 2000, the incoming Chairman-in-Office outlined the following priorities of the Austrian Chair:<sup>6</sup>

In general, a regional approach would be of central importance in finding solutions to security issues (to be understood in the sense of the broader OSCE security concept) in OSCE space. In view of the numerous crisis areas, every little step forward, as small as it may be, would be welcome, there should be no difference in the attention paid to or the treatment of regions and conflicts. In particular, he hoped that results would be achieved in the return and/or the integration of 7.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons in the OSCE area as well as in a functioning Stability Pact for the Balkans.

The Central Asian states were to be more closely integrated into OSCE structures. Because the focus had been on the Balkans during the last few years, the countries of Central Asia had often been neglected and left alone with urgent problems like terrorism and political extremism, illegal arms and drug trafficking, organized crime as well as environmental and water distribution problems as was made clear at the Istanbul Summit in 1999. Now the OSCE was - within the framework of its limited capacities - to become more intensively engaged there and promote regional co-operation.

Endeavours would have to be made to find peaceful solutions for the "frozen conflicts" on the territory of the former Soviet Union, that is in Trans-Dniestria as well as the North Caucasus (Chechnya) and the South Caucasus (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh). At the end of 1999, there had been signs that successful peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan could be conducted and Austria - with the support of the Minsk Group - wanted to take advantage of this opportunity.<sup>7</sup>

---

5 Cf. Die Presse of 18 November 1999.

6 For the following remarks see the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Austrian Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schüssel before the Permanent Council on 13 January 2000, CIO.GAL/1/00g, as well as the OSCE Newsletter 1/2000, pp. 1-4. An English translation of the Chairman's address to the OSCE Permanent Council is to be found at: [http://www.osce.at/osze/seite4\\_oesterreich\\_en.html](http://www.osce.at/osze/seite4_oesterreich_en.html).

7 Even though the Caucasus, as the Austrian President Thomas Klestil observed, was unknown territory for Austrian diplomacy; cf. Die Presse of 19 November 1999.

During the course of the year 2000, the OSCE was to monitor a total of 18 elections and in particular also organize free and fair elections in Kosovo as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Demands were made for the swift implementation of the decisions of the Istanbul Summit, in particular the Rapid Expert Assistance and Co-operation Teams (REACT) concept for the speedy realization of crisis prevention.

The financing scale of contributions for large missions which was to expire at the end of 2000 had to be renegotiated. Moreover the legal status of the OSCE, which is of primary importance for mission work, would have to be clarified so that personnel in different participating States were not treated according to different standards.

The OSCE would have to be strengthened through the reorganization of the OSCE Secretariat, particularly by the establishment of an Operation Centre within the Conflict Prevention Centre.

The relationships of the OSCE to other international organizations, particularly the EU, NATO, the Council of Europe and the United Nations, were to be co-ordinated in accordance with the "Platform for Co-operative Security" adopted in Istanbul.

Alongside the problems already mentioned of refugees and internally displaced persons, in the area of the human dimension of the OSCE, the Austrian Chair planned to deal - in close co-operation with NGOs - primarily with the topics "prevention of torture", "children in armed conflict" and "trafficking in human beings" (in particular women and girls).

In the area of the economic dimension, for which Austria had already taken responsibility from Norway in June 1999, co-operation was to be intensified among the participating States and with international organizations to promote synergies. Here, the OSCE with its "regional" approach would offer an advantage over the "single country" method of the United Nations.

A top-notch event with "dissidents and civil rights activists" was planned for the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, the Chair appointed its Personal Representatives: Ambassador Albert Rohan (Austria) for South-eastern Europe, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk (Poland) for Nagorno-Karabakh, Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini (Switzerland) for the other missions in the Caucasus and OSCE Secretary General Ján Kubiš (Slovakia) for Central Asia.

The programme was greeted affirmatively, delegates responded merely to the questions related to their own countries, for example, those from Central Asia, the US or Russia explained their respective positions on Chechnya. Admittedly, in the last few years, it had been shown that in addition to the planned focus, severe unpredictable problems or crises had repeatedly emerged, which have confronted the current Chair out of the blue and for which it had to develop a solution in consultations with others. This was the case, for example, for Denmark when Albania collapsed, for Poland and

---

8 Cf. CIO.GAL/1/00g, cited above (Note 6), p. 9.

thereafter Norway to a much greater extent in Kosovo or for Romania in Macedonia. Apart from this kind of unpredictability however, on the whole the programme was in line with that of its predecessors and/or continued their agenda and set its own accents to fit the situation accordingly.

In the Austrian Parliament displeasure was expressed that the Foreign Policy Committee was not tasked with dealing with the Chair's programme until 19 January 2000, that is *after* the official international presentation. The opposition Greens expressed criticism that Austria had employed "too few" personnel and expended "too little" money in comparison to Norway.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Norway had appointed a total of 24 diplomats and eight administrative employees (to the foreign ministry in Oslo as well as to the delegation in Vienna). In contrast Austria appointed 18 diplomats and around five administrative staff (at one location). During their non-Chair periods, the ratio has practically been the same for both countries: Both Norway and Austria have been represented by six to seven diplomats and appointed three to four administrative employees each. 180 million Austrian schillings (see below for a detailed account) were foreseen for the budget, although this was not agreed upon by the Austrian Council of Ministers until ten days before the official beginning of the Chairmanship.<sup>10</sup> The Norwegian budget totalled 175 million Austrian schillings<sup>11</sup> in 1999, the year they held the Chair, and 133 million Austrian schillings<sup>12</sup> in 2000 and thus did not differ considerably from the Austrian total. Moreover, a comparison should not be limited to Norway, which is slightly richer *per capita* than Austria, but an evaluation with other Chair countries should be made as well.

On 10 February, the Head of the American OSCE delegation, Ambassador David T. Johnson again voiced criticism on preparation: Because of the "distractions" the Austrian government had faced during the autumn and the winter, on the political level, Austria had not shown "the energy that this organisation needs as its chair", despite the fact that the delegation has done "yeoman's work".<sup>12</sup> "Distractions" allude to the situation in Austria in autumn 1999 when parliamentary elections in October were indecisive: The fact that three parties were nearly equally strong led to very difficult negotiations on forming a coalition, which placed great demands on the leading politicians involved. However, the programme for the OSCE Chair was prepared chiefly by experienced diplomats. The crisis of EU sanctions against Austria, already topical at the time, probably also influenced the US in voicing this criticism.

---

9 Cf. Die Presse of 14 January 2000.

10 However, Foreign Minister Schüssel stated in the same interview that "in an emergency, we could mobilize another 200 million", in: profil of 12 January 2000 (all quotations from Austrian and/or German sources are the author's translations).

11 Information issued by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry in June 2001.

12 profil of 14 February 2000, p. 50, as well as: Address by US Ambassador Johnson to the Permanent Council, 10 February 2000, PC.DEL/59/00, p.1.

*EU Sanctions and the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship*

On 27 January 2000, the negotiations to form a coalition between the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) broke down. Within a very short time, the People's Party agreed to a programme with the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ). On 3 February 2000, the ÖVP and the FPÖ formed a new government. In the course of this unexpected political change, a wave of indignation swept through Austria as well as abroad, which created extreme difficulties for Austrian diplomacy because it too was unexpected and without precedent. The decision by the 14 other EU members to place sanctions on Austria by suspending bilateral political relations was supported by further states like Canada, candidates for EU membership like the Czech Republic as well as Norway and in a more differentiated form, the US. Condemnations by the European Parliament and the European Commission also followed. In Oslo, the Christian Democratic Premier Kjell Magne Bondevik announced his country would - in the case that Haider was appointed to a high position in the government - have serious problems sitting at the same table with Austria during its OSCE Chairmanship in 2000.<sup>13</sup> At first, the Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorbjörn Jagland did not want to conduct bilateral talks with the new Austrian Foreign Minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner.<sup>14</sup> Demands for the resignation of the Austrian Chair were circulated by certain media. It was said that Austria was fully isolated internationally or that it was already at that point in time questionable whether all foreign ministers of Western OSCE States would appear at the regular meeting in Vienna in the following autumn.<sup>15</sup> There were attempts to undermine the Chair by strengthening the Troika and/or other OSCE institutions.<sup>16</sup> US Ambassador Johnson spoke on 10 February of the necessity of a "sharp change in that situation"<sup>17</sup> and of the fact that the credibility of the OSCE was endangered by FPÖ participation in government.<sup>18</sup> It was predicted that from the beginning the Chair would be "paralysed", parallels were drawn between the international isolation of Austria and that of Russia (then suspended from the Council of Europe), even the isolation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was cited:<sup>19</sup> Initially, it was as if the Austrian offices were "paralysed".<sup>20</sup>

---

13 Cf. profil of 31 January 2000, p. 35.

14 Although she was surprised by her appointment to the post of Minister, she was completely familiar with the work as she had been State Secretary in the same Ministry.

15 Cf. profil of 6 February 2000, p. 21.

16 Cf. Jutta Stefan-Bastl, Austria's OSCE Chairmanship: a lame duck from its beginning?, in: Helsinki Monitor 7/2000, p. 6.

17 Address by US Ambassador Johnson to the Permanent Council, cited above (Note 12); cf. also Süddeutsche Zeitung of 19 July 2000, p. 2.

18 Cf. profil of 14 February 2000, p. 50.

19 Cf. Anton Pelinka, Austria's OSCE Chairmanship: A "lame duck" from its beginning, in: Helsinki Monitor 2/2000, pp. 5f. However, Pelinka also refers to the FPÖ as an "extreme right-wing party" - whereas the "Report of the Three Wise Men" in contrast, later characterized it as a "right-wing populist party".

20 Randolph Oberschmidt in: Süddeutsche Zeitung of 19 July 2000, p. 2.

The first international appearance of Foreign Minister Ferrero-Waldner was her introduction to the Permanent Council as the new Chairperson-in-Office on 10 February 2000. The job of the Austrian delegation was made easier by the fact that work at the ambassadorial level and in the Troika generally proceeded without obstacles. The first Troika meeting at the ministerial level had already taken place without difficulties on 27 January, the day the negotiations to form a coalition between the SPÖ and ÖVP failed. The next Troika meeting was not arranged to take place until 31 March. Moreover, the other 14 EU countries could not form a cohesive position with regard to the new Austrian government on the objections of primarily - as was suspected - Denmark (who was afraid a precedent would be set for intervention against smaller countries<sup>21</sup>) and Great Britain (who is generally sceptical about intervention against any EU members). However, during the Austrian speech, the French and Belgian ambassadors left the room - a diplomatic affront.<sup>22</sup>

Right at the beginning of her speech Ms. Ferrero-Waldner made perfectly clear: "We shall exercise to the fullest extent the Chairmanship and the responsibilities it entails for the guidance of the Organization."<sup>23</sup> This stated clearly that the Foreign Minister was not willing to submit to the pressure to resign or reduce the influence of the Chair. Furthermore, she made an "absolute commitment to the values and obligations common to all of us in the OSCE, specifically in the area of human rights". She stated: "It is clear to us that the observance of these values in one's own country is an essential condition for a credible Chairmanship" and in this connection made a reference to the preamble of the government programme of the new Austrian federal government, which had been developed in co-operation with President Thomas Klestil. Likewise it facilitated the situation that in the foreign ministry, the ÖVP and Ms. Ferrero-Waldner, as part of it, constituted a political and personal continuity between the old and new government. The Foreign Minister underlined that she, as a member of the new government, would "take over in full" the programme for the OSCE Chair presented on 13 January, when the old government was still in power, and "make all efforts necessary for its effective implementation".<sup>24</sup>

---

21 However, it was an irony of history that Schüssel in the conclusion to his inaugural speech as Chairman-in-Office on 13 January had made a plea to intervene "successfully every day" in internal affairs! CIO.GAL/1/00g, cited above (Note 6), p. 14.

22 Andorra made clear in retrospect that its absence was not in protest but - as is often the case in other situations - due to its lack of personnel and resources. Information provided by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs (in the following FMFA) of June 2001.

23 Statement by Dr. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria, Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Permanent Council of the OSCE, 10 February 2000, CIO.GAL/6/00 (official English translation), p. 1.

24 In contrast, Heinz Gärtner interprets the "guarantee of mutual assistance between the EU countries" (strived for in the new government's programme in the chapter on "Security") in the sense that the new government will focus a "large part of its energy" on this goal. In the chapter "Foreign and European Policy" in the new government programme it is stated that the government would make "strenuous efforts" to utilize "to the full" the OSCE "potential (...) for conflict prevention" etc. However, in Gärtner's view, "the real focus of

The situation slowly became easier because the greater part of OSCE work was carried out at the ambassadorial and expert levels where the political boycott was ineffective. The Austrian Foreign Minister proved an "active and commendable"<sup>25</sup> Chairperson, who - despite the extra burden she carried due to the disputes on the sanctions in the EU area - in the course of the year *inter alia* visited over a dozen conflict areas and a total of 20 OSCE participating States as well as making several visits to the United Nations in New York and Geneva, the Council of Europe, and the European Commission. Moreover, she was the first Chairperson-in-Office ever to visit the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council.<sup>26</sup> After the Easter holidays, less pressure was placed on Austria and from June on most EU member states did not observe diplomatic sanctions any longer which in the end were lifted officially due to the conclusions of the "Report by the Three Wise Men" of 8 September 2000.

### *Budget und Personnel*

The total OSCE budget is marked by huge fluctuations and totals almost three billion Austrian schillings.<sup>27</sup> The total Austrian contribution was under ten million each in 1994 and 1995, around 20 million in both 1996 and 1997, almost 80 million in 1998 and 70 million Austrian schillings in 1999,<sup>28</sup> thus exhibiting a tremendous increase. Still during the period of the SPÖ/ÖVP government in the autumn of 1999, the SPÖ Finance Minister Rudolf Edlinger set his sights on a reduction of the total budget, which according to statements by the then Foreign Minister Schüssel would have endangered the functioning of the OSCE Chair.<sup>29</sup> However, at the beginning of the Chairmanship, in January 2000, 180 million Austrian schillings were allocated to the budget. This meant that again there was a considerable increase, primarily with regard to the following budget items: the membership contribution at

---

the (new) Austrian federal government" is on the preparation of the Austrian armed forces for "the whole spectrum of European crisis management (Petersberg Missions)". From this he draws the conclusion that Austria's commitment to the "instruments of *soft security*" is on the whole in danger - a conclusion which since then has (cf. budget development) proven unfounded. Heinz Gärtner, Austria and the OSCE, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (Ed.), OSCE Yearbook 2000, Baden-Baden 2001, pp. 83-97, here: pp. 94ff.

- 25 Heinrich Schneider, Die OSZE im Zusammenhang der europäischen Politik [The OSCE in the Context of European Policy], in: Werner Weidenfeld/Wolfgang Wessels (Eds.), Jahrbuch der Europäischen Integration [Yearbook of European Integration] 1999/2000, Bonn 2000, pp. 459-468, here: p. 465.
- 26 Cf. the homepage of the Austrian Chair: CiO: "The OSCE Chairmanship was one of the highlights of Austrian foreign policy this year", at: [http://www.osce.at/osze/seite\\_4\\_oesterreich\\_en.html](http://www.osce.at/osze/seite_4_oesterreich_en.html).
- 27 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Annual Report 2000 on OSCE Activities, 1 November 1999 - 31 October 2000, The Secretary General, Vienna, 24 November 2000.
- 28 Cf. the yearly "Außenpolitische Berichte" [Foreign Policy Reports] of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs (in the following: AP-Bericht).
- 29 Cf. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung of 2 December 1999, p. 17.



13.5 million (a 2.05 per cent share of the total); a contribution of 51.5 million (an Austrian share of 2.35 per cent of the total) for large OSCE missions and projects to be agreed upon individually (Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, including organizing elections); as well as so-called "voluntary contributions" totalling 68 million. This sum total of 68 million comprises 14 million for salaries of Austrians in OSCE missions (excluding Kosovo), 25 million for voluntary project funding, eight million for the secondment to election monitoring units, six million for Chairmanship travel expenses and 15 million for the organization of the OSCE Ministerial Council.<sup>30</sup> On 1 September 2000, the number of personnel totalled 42 persons, that is, 3.2 per cent of the international staff according to the mandate.<sup>31</sup> In the year 2000, there were 157 Austrian election monitors (5.2 per cent of the total) deployed.<sup>32</sup>

### *The Austrian Chairmanship - An Assessment*

#### *The Regional Balance Sheet*

The Chair's record with regard to *South-eastern Europe* is mainly positive. In the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on 24 September 2000, the election of Vojislav Koštunica ushered in the change in government hoped for by the OSCE. On 10 November, this country, having been suspended from the OSCE since 1992, was readmitted to the OSCE family of states, which was described as the most important event of the year 2000.<sup>33</sup> The elections in Kosovo organized by the OSCE were peaceful, voter participation was (apart from the Serb boycott) high (79 per cent) and the moderate political forces favoured by the international community were victorious. The elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were less successful; there, the hoped-for strengthening of multi-ethnic and non-nationalist parties was rather modest. The police service school in Vučitrn, up to now the only multi-ethnic institution in Kosovo - which was able to offer 3,000 future police officers a basic training programme by the end of 2000 - can again be described as very successful.<sup>34</sup> For *Central Asia*, a more co-ordinated approach was agreed upon at the Ministerial Council Meeting in Oslo in 1998. In this connection, in September 1999, the former OSCE Secretary General Wilhelm Höynck introduced a report as the basis for a corresponding decision at the Istanbul Summit in November. The Austrian Chair extended the OSCE presence in all five countries. Moreover, it organized a conference in Tashkent in co-operation with the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention

---

30 Cf. AP-Bericht 2000, pp. 351ff.

31 Cf. homepage of the Austrian Chair, cited above (Note 26).

32 Information from the FMFA in June 2001.

33 Cf. homepage of the Austrian Chair, cited above (Note 26).

34 Cf. AP-Bericht 2000, p. 102.

(UNODCCP) in October 2000 on regional co-operation in Central Asia in the fight against drug trafficking, organized crime and terrorism. Austria assumed part of these costs itself. The OSCE Secretary General, Ján Kubiš, who had been active in the region before, was now, as the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office for Central Asia, initiating a political dialogue with representatives from the region.<sup>35</sup>

In Istanbul, the British Foreign Minister Robin Cook had started an initiative on the topic of water resource shortages in Central Asia. The project for a conference on water management in London where the Central Asian governments had been invited, however, had to be abandoned because there was a lack of willingness on their part to participate in the endeavour despite support by the Chair.<sup>36</sup> One of the difficulties was that states where important rivers originate (like China) were not envisaged as participants.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the Central Asian states have a stronger interest in economic and security co-operation, areas in which the OSCE has less to offer than for example Russia.<sup>38</sup>

It was sobering how little effect the Chair had in the *Caucasus*: In the conflict in Chechnya the Assistance Group had still not been able to return to the crisis area in 2000. The main arguments against this had been security reservations by the Russians who held off the OSCE for some time with promises and negotiations so that there were as few international observers in the region as possible. At least, the office of the Russian human rights representative for Chechnya, Vladimir A. Kalamonov, was given technical support and training programmes were offered to its employees.<sup>39</sup> Hopes for a breakthrough in the negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia on Nagorno-Karabakh fell through. Around the beginning of 2001, the dialogue climate between the two parties even got appreciably worse.<sup>40</sup> The establishment of a monitoring mission along the approximately 80 kilometre-long border between Georgia and Chechnya in the spring of 2000 was more successful. At the beginning of the year Russia had lamented that the Chechen rebels were being provided with weapons delivered through Georgia and had demanded better border controls. The OSCE Monitoring Mission under the leadership of Austrian Brigadier Bernd Lubenik was able to defuse tensions in the border area.<sup>41</sup> The Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office for the

---

35 However, after his mandate had ended, Kubiš expressed opposition to this kind of "*cumul de mandats*" - the Secretary General should not have to have divided loyalties, one to a region and one to the whole OSCE area. Cf. Ján Kubiš, Key Note Address, in: Diplomatic Academy (Ed.), cited above (Note 4), p. 13.

36 Cf. AP-Bericht 2000, p. 110.

37 Cf. Stefan-Bastil, cited above (Note 4), p. 4, as well as verbal statements.

38 Cf. Randolph Oberschmidt/Wolfgang Zellner, OSCE at the Crossroads (CORE Working Paper 2), Hamburg 2001, p. 21.

39 Cf. AP-Bericht 2000, p. 105.

40 Cf. Jean-Christophe Peuch, Armenia/Azerbaijan. Pessimism Over Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Talks Prevail, in: RFL/RL, 23 March 2001.

41 Cf. Lydia Wazir/Marina Bartl, Tensions reduced on Georgian-Chechen border where OSCE monitors continue to observe, in: OSCE Newsletter 2/2001, pp. 8-9, here: p. 8.

Caucasus (with the exception of Nagorno-Karabakh), Heidi Tagliavini, was able to revive the negotiation process between Georgia and South Ossetia. However, the parties to the conflict could not be moved any closer towards agreement.<sup>42</sup> In addition, there has been no movement in the "frozen" conflict in Trans-Dniestria. All the same, during the Austrian Chair it was the second time the OSCE Chair had paid a visit to the Republic of Moldova and the first time ever to Trans-Dniestria.<sup>43</sup>

The regional approach must still prove its worth in all three regions, although in South-eastern Europe, it has at least been accepted and is sustained by the Stability Pact. Developments in the economy and civil society are going through very different stages in each country. Certain states like Slovenia and Croatia do not even feel they belong to the region. The South and North Caucasus are just as little a region as is South-eastern Europe, even the South Caucasus on its own has had no political identity up to now.<sup>44</sup> In Central Asia as well as in the Caucasus, states were forced into co-operation during the long Soviet period so that they view OSCE initiatives with reservation.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, they do not represent a unique "cognitive region"<sup>46</sup> and tend to emphasize their distinctive rather than their common features.

### *Specific Policy Fields - A Balance Sheet*

In the human dimension, within the framework of the Stability Pact primarily promoted by the EU, the OSCE took over the Gender Task Force in working area I and the Special Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings, in particular women and girls, in working area III.<sup>47</sup> For the latter, Foreign Minister Ferrero-Waldner appointed the former Austrian Minister for Women's Affairs, Helga Konrad, as Co-ordinator. At the OSCE Ministerial Council in Vienna, a declaration on combating trafficking in human beings was passed.<sup>48</sup> A first conference took place in Palermo with the appointment of country co-ordinators for South-eastern Europe where the decision was taken to meet once a year.

---

42 Cf. Heidi Tagliavini, Defence of the Future - The Caucasus, lecture at the Central European University, Budapest, on 5 March 2001.

43 Cf. AP-Bericht 2000, p. 107.

44 Cf. Oberschmidt/Zellner, cited above (Note 38), p. 21.

45 Cf. Herbert Salber, Head of the OSCE Centre in Almaty, in: Diplomatic Academy (Ed.), cited above (Note 4), p. 26.

46 On the term *cognitive region* see Andrew Hurrell, Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective, in: Louise Fawcett/Andrew Hurrell (Eds.), Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order, Oxford 1997, pp. 37-73.

47 Cf. Thomas M. Buchsbaum, The OSCE and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe: A Mother-Daughter, Brother-Sister or Partner Relationship, in: Helsinki Monitor 4/2000, pp. 62-79.

48 Cf. OSCE, Eighth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, Vienna, 27-28 November 2000, Decisions of the Ministerial Council, reprinted in this volume, pp. 497-501, here: Decision No. 1, Enhancing the OSCE's Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, pp. 497-499.

With regard to the question of equality, which had already been a priority of the Norwegian Chair,<sup>49</sup> on 1 June 2000, the Permanent Council approved the OSCE Action Plan for Gender Issues, which is to promote equal treatment of men and women in the whole OSCE area including the OSCE Secretariat and OSCE institutions.<sup>50</sup> In November, the International Helsinki Federation (IHF) published "Women 2000", a systematic 552-page analysis on the status of women's rights in 29 countries in the OSCE area and gave considerable endorsement to the debate on this subject.<sup>51</sup>

The Chair had less success in promoting the protection of children in armed conflicts, which was demonstrated as early as May 2000 at the seminar on the human dimension in Warsaw. After a series of meetings by an informal working group open to all participating States and after consultations with external experts like Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, a substantive paper was produced which balanced the positions of the participating States, but did not meet Russia's approval.<sup>52</sup>

In the area of the politico-military dimension, the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), in negotiations lasting eleven months, generated a Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons which was finally adopted on 24 November 2000. Great Britain or rather the British Co-ordinator Paul Flaherty ran the central co-ordination of these negotiations on the Document without the Chair being particularly involved. This pioneering agreement was the OSCE reaction to the proliferation of these weapons in OSCE space, in particular in the Caucasus and South-eastern Europe.<sup>53</sup>

Originally in 1999 in Istanbul, adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) was decided. However, because Russia's conduct has been contrary to the terms of the Treaty most participating States have up to now not taken steps to ratify it. This means that this most important arms control agreement remains in the outdated (bloc-structure) version and no longer corresponds to changed realities.

The economic and environmental dimension has up to now been a kind of stepchild of the OSCE. However, it has gained importance recently as far as this was possible given the limited resources of the Organization. In June 2000, at the eighth annual Economic Forum, the Austrian Chair implemented a new concept for the structure of the Forum. The preparations on the subject matter of this forum took place in three seminars in Tashkent, Sarajevo and

---

49 Cf. Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Report No. 21 to the Storting (1999-2000), Focus on Human Dignity. A Plan of Action for Human Rights, Oslo, December 1999, section 5.3.5. OSCE.

50 Cf. AP-Bericht 2000, p. 108.

51 See homepage of the IHF under: [http://www.ihf-hr.org/reports/women/Woman\\_2000.pdf](http://www.ihf-hr.org/reports/women/Woman_2000.pdf).

52 Cf. Stefan-Bastl, cited above (Note 4), p. 5, as well as oral statements.

53 OSCE, Forum for Security Co-operation, Vienna, 24 November 2000, Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, reprinted in this volume, pp. 503-519. See also Hans J. Gießmann, Small Arms: A Field of Action for the OSCE, in: OSCE Yearbook 2000, cited above (Note 24), pp. 345-357.

Tbilisi, which was met with approval and is to be continued in this manner.<sup>54</sup> A workshop on the Århus Convention (i.e. on public access to environmental information) took place, with financial backing from the Chair, in Ashgabad/Turkmenistan in May with the goal of training government representatives and NGO workers in environmental law. The chair of this dimension was already transferred to Romania after the end of the Economic Forum.

In 1999, at the Istanbul Summit Meeting, still no decision had been made on the successor of the High Commissioner on National Minorities as all three candidates vying for the position, Daniel Tarschys (Sweden), José Cutilheiro (Portugal) and the Austrian Erhard Busek, were blocking one another.<sup>55</sup> At the Ministerial in November 2000, the Swede Rolf Ekéus was appointed as the successor to Max van der Stoep.<sup>56</sup> In addition, in 2000 the HCNM presented a comprehensive report on the situation of the Roma and Sinti.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media registered increased pressure on the media above all in the area of the former Soviet Union. On her visit to Moscow, the Austrian Foreign Minister presented a list of journalists, who had disappeared in Chechnya, to President Vladimir Putin. Russian attempts to prevent the re-election of Media Representative Freimut Duve failed. On 31 May 2001, his mandate was extended - after a sixth-month delay - until 31 December 2003.

In October 2000, at the fifth Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw, 800 participants and 160 NGOs took part, which emphasized the importance of the co-operation with NGOs that had begun with the Norwegian Chair and was continued by Austria.<sup>57</sup>

*Organizational and Institutional Focal Points (OSCE Reform, Preparation of the Ministerial) - A Balance Sheet*

Strengthening the OSCE as an organization was a special item on the agenda of the Austrian Chair - particularly in view of the fact that the OSCE headquarters is in Vienna. As a result of the fact that the OSCE is not a subject of international law, it is faced with legal and financial disadvantages. Its personnel, especially those in the missions, are treated differently from country to country. The Istanbul Summit Meeting in 1999 tasked the Permanent Council with setting up a working group on this open to all participating States. Austria appointed Helmut Tichy as the chair and invested a great deal in its work. Tichy found a flexible formula, which envisages a convention, but would change little in the existing legal foundation (without ratification). Although this solution was not ideal, it received the support of the large majority of the participating States. However, in the end, they were unable to

---

54 Cf. AP-Bericht 2000, p. 109.

55 Cf. Die Presse of 19 November 1999.

56 He assumed this office on 1 July 2001.

57 Cf. AP-Bericht 2000, p. 108.

achieve a consensus. The reason for this was, on the one hand, that Russia - who would like the OSCE to be the umbrella organization for European security - has very concrete ideas with regard to legal capacity, and indeed, it does seem these could be realized. On the other hand, the US as the only world power is less and less willing to compromise and does not want another comprehensive international organization alongside the United Nations with legally binding obligations, but instead would prefer a flexible and controllable instrument, a kind of a "forum for political dialogue"<sup>58</sup> as it were without an institutionally independent existence.<sup>59</sup> Great Britain was not willing to give its consent either.

One of the special challenges for the Chair was negotiating a new scale for contributions for large missions, that is for around 80 per cent of the budget, as the old scale was only valid until the end of 2000. However despite intensive efforts, due to US resistance no solution was found with the exception of a provisional reduction in the Russian contribution. It was only in the spring of 2001 that the Romanian Chair achieved a result - although not giving economic criteria enough consideration - with alterations in the contributions of twelve states, primarily for the US (+1.17 per cent), Germany (+0.97 per cent) and Russia (-1.78 per cent). The Austrian share remained the same.<sup>60</sup>

Because of the organizational difficulties which became visible in the Kosovo operation, in 1999, the Istanbul Summit had passed a decision to reorganize the Secretariat as well as building Rapid Expert Assistance and Co-operation Teams (REACT); this decision was implemented essentially during the course of the year 2000. With the establishment of a personnel department (Department of Human Resources) - utilizing public vacancy announcements for the first time - and an Operation Centre in the Conflict Prevention Centre, the capacities for civilian crisis management have been strengthened. The main tasks of the Operation Centre are the operational planning and the establishment of missions. Its first practical test was the deployment of the Mission to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia after the fall of Milošević. The REACT concept was passed by the Permanent Council in June and was ready for operation in the spring of 2001.<sup>61</sup>

The Austrian Chair has intensified co-operation with other international organizations. Two "2+2" meetings of both Chairs and Secretaries General of the Council of Europe and the OSCE took place, representatives of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) were invited to meetings, for the first time an EU External Relations Commissioner (Chris Patten) and a NATO Secretary General (Lord Robertson) gave speeches before the Permanent Council in Vienna and moreover, the invitation to Javier Solana, High

---

58 Josiah B. Rosenblatt, Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Mission to the OSCE, at: <http://www.osce.usia.co.at/dip-acad23feb01.html>.

59 Cf. Oberschmidt/Zellner, cited above (Note 38), pp. 10f.

60 Cf. AP-Bericht 2000, pp. 112f., and information from FMFA of June 2001.

61 This system was put into operation in April 2001. For details see Márton Krasznai, Making REACT operational, in: OSCE Yearbook 2000, cited above (Note 24), pp. 139-147.

Representative of the European Union for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) to speak before the Permanent Council was issued still under the Austrian Chair. Relations with the Asian partners for co-operation, Japan, Korea and Thailand, were also intensified.

One of the problems that the Austrian Chair was confronted with was the so-called "transparency" issue. From the ranks of the participating States, e.g. on the part of the Netherlands,<sup>62</sup> as well as from the NGO side,<sup>63</sup> complaints became loud about the growing predominance of five states within the OSCE - the US, Russia, France, Great Britain and Germany. It was argued that consultations take place almost exclusively among these five states.<sup>64</sup> The Austrian Chair endeavoured to counteract this by opening Preparatory Committee consultations to all participating States. Also the Polish Chair during its office had attempted to take steps towards a "democratic" decision-making process.<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, transparency does not always make sense. Certain consultations are better held in confidential or smaller circles if they are to be successful. Recently, a considerable increase in US influence has been observed. However, at least rich Western states like Norway or Austria are less dependent on yielding to this influence than countries in transition, even more so if these, like Poland or Romania, have just joined or are trying to obtain membership in NATO.<sup>66</sup>

Finally the question must be posed whether the Austrian Chair could have *prevented* the failure - due to the Russian veto - of the Vienna Ministerial Meeting, the sole and most serious occurrence of this kind since the end of the Cold War. There are two positions on this issue: One is that Russia's conduct is a delayed, but clear-cut reaction to NATO's Kosovo operation, which had not been agreed upon with the Moscow government, and was just temporarily concealed in Istanbul by a weak government and a weak President Yeltsin. The fundamental points of Russia's criticism of the OSCE, for example, its geographic imbalance, the insufficient formalization of OSCE work

---

62 "We deplore the total absence of transparency. We are not aware of any consultations, in the Permanent Council, the Preparatory Committee or elsewhere, on what exactly the (Rapporteur) Mission (to Belgrade, A.S./M.M.) was supposed to investigate or to explore, and along what parameters (...) Furthermore, we wish to share with other interested members of the Permanent Council our concern about the course this Organization is taking. Increasingly we are witnessing a small group of non-elected Representatives benefiting from so many privileges of, apparently, a by now structural nature, that this is not only weakening the much cherished flexibility (...) it is also starting to affect this Organization in its core. After all (...) the essence of consensus is the right to participate in the decision making process, and, even more, the right to know what is going on." Statement by the Delegation of the Netherlands, PC.JOUR/313, 7 December 2000, Annex.

63 Cf. International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, OSCE Should be More Transparent. Letter to Chairman in Office, Vienna, 17 May 2001, in: <http://www.ihf-hr.org/appeals/010517.htm>

64 Cf. Oberschmidt/Zellner, cited above (Note 38), p. 8.

65 Cf. Adam Kobieracki, The role and functioning of the OSCE Chairmanship - the Polish perspective, in: Helsinki Monitor 4/1999, pp. 17-26.

66 Norway has been a NATO member since 1949. Austria is, in keeping with its governmental programme, not striving to become a member, at least not during this legislative period.

and the Chair's too great leeway, should be clearly conveyed by now and lead to a shift in paradigm.<sup>67</sup> In view of these structural problems, another Chair would hardly have been able to modify the Russian position either. Moreover, it is no "big drama" and more honest to admit differences of opinion.<sup>68</sup> The other position on Russia's uncooperative stance at the Vienna Ministerial is that there was a certain room to manoeuvre for the Chair. However, Austria was not familiar enough with so-called "Russia handling" and thus unfortunately Russia was pushed into a corner in which it would have been better it had not been pushed. More consultations and greater attention to the specifically Russian point of view would have brought more positive results. The present situation, it is argued, is partially in the interest of the most important power in the OSCE, the US, which is not as dependent on diplomatic considerations because it has other levels for negotiation at its disposal. Thus, according to this position, a compromise between the EU and Russia could even have been found on the return of the Assistance Group to Chechnya as well as restructuring the OSCE into an international organization. This failed however due to the US lack of willingness to compromise and perhaps also to the fact that the Chair did not mediate effectively enough. In this context, one also speaks of "US handling".<sup>69</sup>

### *Effects of the Sanctions*

In view of the storm of protest after the formation of the ÖVP/FPÖ coalition, the question is whether the EU-14 sanctions actually impaired, as it was repeatedly predicted initially, the discharge of the OSCE Chair's office. After "some uncomfortable moments also within the OSCE"<sup>70</sup> there was however, already at Foreign Minister Ferrero-Waldner's second appearance before the Permanent Council in June, praise and assent from the delegates on the consistent work of the Austrian delegation.<sup>71</sup>

At the beginning of the Chair period, the then Chairman-in-Office Schüssel spoke of the necessity to "co-operate closely" with the EU Presidency (in this case, Portugal and then France). After the sanctions were imposed, it became apparent that this would be precarious particularly with Portugal's Prime Minister, who was at the same time the Chairman of the Socialist International and also advocated the sanctions. Moreover, the EU makes up the largest group, when including candidates for membership, even over half of the OSCE participating States as well as contributing two thirds to the budget; in this respect the troubled relationship between Austria and the EU-14 certainly complicated the Chair's task. However at the end of the day, there were no

---

67 Cf. Oberschmidt/Zellner, cited above (Note 38), p. 6.

68 Cf. Stefan-Bastl, cited above (Note 4), p. 7.

69 Oberschmidt/Zellner, cited above (Note 38), p. 7.

70 Stefan-Bastl, cited above (Note 16), p. 6.

71 Cf. Die Presse of 2 January 2001.



signs of any significant negative impact on the Chair's capacity to fulfil its mandate. This may be connected with the fact that the EU is not really that unified, that the CFSP does not really have an effect within the OSCE, that Great Britain, France and Germany hold different positions on many issues and that here the activities are at a multilateral level.<sup>72</sup>

Information was circulated repeatedly by the media that Austria, for the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, had planned an event with all foreign ministers, and that this then could not take place because of the sanctions.<sup>73</sup> *De facto*, several scenarios were sounded out at the diplomatic level in the autumn of 1999, long before the sanctions were imposed. Even then, the "government level" variation appeared unrealistic: One could hardly expect the foreign ministers to meet twice in one year in the same capital, the meeting date set for the end of July was inconvenient because it fell during the vacation period, the financial expense would have been considerable, holding an event in Finland would be easier and the focus of the Chair lay more on the human dimension. Thus already on 13 January 2000, when the Chair assumed office, there clearly was no longer any talk about an official governmental event.<sup>74</sup> However, the anniversary programme with a focus on "civil society" with invitations to Vaclav Havel or Jiří Dienstbier could not be realized either; in the end Hans-Dietrich Genscher gave the official speech.

During the first half of the year, France made the preparation of the Ministerial Council more difficult by delaying the process of determining a date until the Austrian Chair finally simply set one and made it known. The complaint of the French delegation that no decision had been passed (which it could have prevented by the consensus principle in any case), fell on deaf ears due to the generally recognized leeway of the Chair.

It is not the intention here to evaluate the Ministerial Council in Vienna itself. At this point merely the prognosis of limited participation due to the sanctions will be assessed. *De facto* two foreign ministers were absent from a total of 55: those of France and Italy. Up to now, there has never been an Italian foreign minister present at an OSCE Ministerial Council. Italy has always sent a state secretary and the foreign minister attended only Summit Meetings.<sup>75</sup> The only country demonstratively absent was France. This, however, had been cushioned by the prior visit of President Chirac on his "*tour de capital*" in preparation for the French EU Presidency. The EU Representative for the CFSP Solana was unable to attend due to an urgent Middle East meeting at the United Nations in New York; on the other hand, the initially extremely critical Belgian Foreign Minister Louis Michel was present and the

---

72 Cf. Oberschmidt/Zellner, cited above (Note 38), p. 7.

73 Cf. Süddeutsche Zeitung of 19 July 2000, p. 2.

74 Cf. CIO.GAL/1/00g, cited above (Note 6).

75 Information from the FMFA in June 2001.

US was represented by Madeleine Albright, the first time ever that the US had sent a foreign minister to an OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting.

Thus in summary, one can say that in the end the EU sanctions only caused minimal interference in the work of the Austrian Chair. Reasons for this were: the active engagement of Foreign Minister Ferrero-Waldner, which also led the Austrian people to put her at the top of the politicians popularity scale; the fact that in the OSCE the majority of the work is done on the delegation and expert levels; the consensus structure of the OSCE and finally the speedy realization among the delegates that "whoever would want to weaken Austria, would also weaken the OSCE".<sup>76</sup>

### *Conclusion*

On the whole, the Austrian Chair proved to be a "decent, normal presidency".<sup>77</sup> While at the beginning it was forced to work against a "headwind",<sup>78</sup> after a certain period - apart from French efforts to cause disruptions - a normal working atmosphere set in. An influence of the new government party, the FPÖ, on the work of the Chair cannot be ascertained. It must be assessed as dramatic that for the first time the OSCE Ministerial Council was unable to draw up a final declaration. The question is whether this could have been prevented or whether in future it will carry less weight. It is distressing that there are IHF grievances on the deterioration of the human rights conditions in the area of the former Soviet Union and that the number of (visa-) borders particularly between East and West have increased, just after one would have thought the Iron Curtain had been overcome. Nevertheless, the return of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the circle of participating States as well as the pioneering Document on Small Weapons and Light Arms can be described as special successes of the Chair. As vehemently (and unexpectedly) as the sanctions befell Austria at the beginning, in the end, they had an astonishingly minimal effect on OSCE work, also due to the stable structure of the Austrian political system as well as, after all, its foreign policy.

---

76 Ferrero-Waldner in: profil of 13 February 2000, p. 50.

77 Süddeutsche Zeitung of 19 July 2000, p. 2.

78 Ferrero-Waldner in: Die Presse of 25 November 2000.