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The OSCE under the Romanian Chairmanship - A Retrospective View

Responsibilities and Goals

Following the decision of the OSCE Istanbul Summit, Romania took over the Chairmanship-in-Office of the OSCE on 1 January 2001. The difficulty of fulfilling this complex mandate was threefold: avoiding an internal crisis in the OSCE, foreshadowed by the result of the 2000 Vienna Ministerial; managing the intricate issues on the OSCE agenda, such as stabilizing the situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and adapting the OSCE to the new security framework which emerged after the terrorist attacks against the United States.

For a country whose diplomacy was not very well known, the complex situation in Europe, the explosive changes on the international level and, last but not least, the internal difficulties of the Organization represented a test the passing of which not only its credibility as a relevant actor of the Euro-Atlantic community, but also the actual future of the Organization depended upon. We were fully aware of this double responsibility and did our utmost to discharge all our obligations and cope with the complex and changing security environment. In 2001, all international organizations involved in the security of the Euro-Atlantic area carried out a tremendous amount of activity in searching for solutions to existing crises through participation in meetings in which the shape and future of Europe were discussed and in consultations aimed at better co-ordination among the various structures with a view to strengthening Europe-wide security and stability.

Among our priorities and objectives were the observance of OSCE norms, principles and commitments; the strengthening of the OSCE as an active instrument for conflict prevention, early warning, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation; promoting the rule of law and human rights; strengthening the OSCE's activity in the economic and environmental dimension; enabling it to cope with new security challenges such as international terrorism and extremism, organized crime and corruption; institutional consolidation of the OSCE; and strengthening co-operation with other international organizations acting in areas relevant to the OSCE. Our ultimate goal was to contribute to the improvement of the political, economic and environmental security of the citizens of the OSCE participating States, based on the respect of human rights.

After the 2000 Vienna Ministerial, it became visible that the OSCE was heading for an internal crisis. Under these circumstances, our responsibility was all the greater and we acted from the very outset towards rebuilding con-

confidence in the capacity of the OSCE. As a result, we launched a process of informal consultations on strengthening the OSCE's role. Open-ended meetings were held, emphasizing our readiness to reflect on the Organization's political role, its broad objectives, priorities and working methods. Concrete suggestions were made. We created a Working Group on OSCE Reform that considered ways of strengthening the OSCE's role in the European and international security framework and on improving the coherence of action of the OSCE's institutions and field operations.

Co-operation and Synergy Effects

We understood that, in order to be instrumental in solving all these problems, the OSCE had to work in close synergy with other international organizations, notably the United Nations, NATO, the European Union and the Council of Europe, as well as other more specialized agencies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Consequently, I met with the heads of these international organizations to discuss concrete measures for enhancing co-operation, i.e. setting up compatible structures, developing common recruitment and training standards, enhancing co-operation between headquarters and the field, and identifying new areas of co-operation and establishing mechanisms for efficient interaction.

On 29 January 2001, when I addressed the United Nations Security Council in New York, it was the first time an OSCE Chairman-in-Office had been invited to meet the Security Council as a whole and discuss the comprehensive area of co-operation between the two organizations. On that occasion, I met with the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and reiterated our determination to strengthen co-operation between the OSCE and the UN, based on the principles of complementarity and a clear division of labour.

During 2001, I had several talks with the European Union Presidency Foreign Ministers (Sweden and Belgium) and discussed areas of common action aimed at enhancing co-operation between our organizations, including co-operation in the field. The same spirit of co-operation and mutual reinforcement prevailed in contacts and visits with EU Commissioner Christopher Patten and High Representative Javier Solana.

We took vigorous action to strengthen the ties of co-operation between NATO and the OSCE, being aware that the two organizations need each other, their advantages are complementary and together they are in a position to manage the different crisis situations they are confronted with more easily. To this end, during my meetings with the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Lord Robertson, I stressed the need for increasing co-operation at both the political and expert level. In particular, I addressed the Foreign Ministers' Session of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council

(EAPC) in Budapest on 30 May and the NATO/EAPC meeting in Brussels on 27 November.

We also aimed at co-operating more closely with the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, an institution tightly connected with the governmental level, with the same geographical representation and similar concerns. By all means, the fact that it was headed by Adrian Severin, a Romanian national, benefited the rapprochement between our institutions. Alongside informal permanent consultations and contacts with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I attended the Standing Committee meeting in Vienna and the Tenth Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Paris.

Responding to the crisis in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and to the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States of America were high priorities on our agenda. In both situations, the Organization, under the Romanian leadership, reacted quickly and effectively.

Combating Terrorism and Organized Crime

A sensitive area of regional and interregional co-operation where co-ordinated actions can bring added value is the fight against terrorism and organized crime.

More than any other single act, the September 11 attacks against the United States brought home the dangers of international terrorism to freedom, humanity and the security of the individual, values that the OSCE is committed to defending and upholding. We have condemned these attacks vigorously and fully supported the creation of a broad international coalition against terrorism. Alongside other international organizations, we have begun to consider the specific contribution the OSCE can make to the international fight against terrorism. When I addressed the Permanent Council in a special session on 21 September 2001, I identified three areas where the OSCE can bring added value:

- making use of political will and solidarity in committing to joint action, with an action-oriented decision on and a Plan of Action for combating terrorism to be adopted at the Bucharest Ministerial Council;
- focusing attention on addressing root causes, such as economic and social isolation, which can be fertile ground for extremist ideologies, and fighting the “grey zones” of organized crime, including trafficking in human beings and arms;
- acting as a bridge between regional initiatives in order to set common priorities.

In addition to the Plan of Action adopted by the Ministerial Council in December 2001, an international conference on “Enhancing Security and Sta-

bility in Central Asia: Strengthening Comprehensive Efforts to Counter Terrorism” was convened in Bishkek on 13 and 14 December. Participating States discussed and shared experiences regarding the prevention and combating of terrorism and related crimes throughout the OSCE area. The Conference took place only ten days after the Ministerial Council and thus also provided the opportunity to begin implementation of the decisions and the contents of the documents adopted in Bucharest as well as other relevant international instruments. The Conference responded to the concerns of participating States in Central Asia about international terrorism and offered the opportunity to adopt a concrete Programme of Action as a first follow-up to the Bucharest Plan of Action. The Programme encompasses specific challenges and needs in Central Asia in particular and initiates a long-term action-oriented process, assisting Central Asian states to combat the threat of terrorism.

As a Troika member, also in 2002 we remain engaged in the fight against terrorism. Consequently, we support the Portuguese Chairmanship’s initiatives, including the actions of the Personal Representative for Preventing and Combating Terrorism. At present, it is important to keep our promises, to fulfil our obligations, to apply the measures included in the Bucharest Plan of Action, a comprehensive and particularly valuable document. We have to envision the OSCE’s involvement in combating terrorism within the general framework of the efforts made by the main international actors. No international organization will be successful acting on its own without co-ordinating its actions with the other institutions. Terrorism is a phenomenon with multiple implications, which must be tackled on several levels, namely the military, economic, political, and legal. The OSCE can make a specific contribution, taking into account the arrangements made by others. A first step was the international conference in Lisbon in June 2002, when the Secretaries General and/or Chairmen of the key organizations involved in the fight against terrorism analysed the modalities of enhancing co-ordination and co-operation amongst the various international agencies.

In the process of combating organized crime, we gave special attention to the illegal trafficking in human beings. We organized, in co-operation with the Southeast European Co-operative Initiative (SECI) Regional Centre, a regional conference on “Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Immigration” in Bucharest on 21 May 2001, which was attended by senior government and law enforcement representatives. The agreed conclusions of that meeting set out priorities for national, regional and internationally co-ordinated actions to eliminate trafficking in human beings, in which the Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings is to play a crucial role.

Regional Issues

Regional issues represented a major focus in the activities of the Chairmanship-in-Office and the OSCE as a whole. In 2001, there were some positive developments in many OSCE participating States, notably in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Yet, there are still far too many places with conflicts, economic and social inequalities, lack of political freedom and intolerance. There are new threats that menace the societies of OSCE participating States, such as terrorism, organized crime, trafficking in human beings and drugs, as well as pervasive corruption.

“Frozen conflicts” became a matter of increased concern. There is a real danger they could develop their own dynamism. Regarding the withdrawal of foreign troops, military equipment and ammunition, progress was made in implementing the Istanbul commitments, which should continue. Renewed efforts and approaches should relaunch the political settlement process in these areas.

I visited almost all areas of tension and met with representatives of participating States and of international organizations and institutions. These meetings provided opportunities to discuss matters of interest to the OSCE.

Naturally, South-eastern Europe was a priority for us. The OSCE is pursuing its own programmes in the countries of South-eastern Europe, such as good governance and anti-corruption projects, development of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and independent media, and promotion of multi-ethnicity in education and the public sector, including police forces.

I visited all the OSCE’s field presences in South-eastern Europe several times. I inaugurated the OSCE Mission in Belgrade; attended the Heads of Mission meeting in Belgrade; appointed a Personal Representative for the Stability Pact; encouraged dialogue, consolidation of democratic institutions, rule of law and respect for human rights, and regional co-operation; supported the preparation and scrutiny of electoral processes in the region - Kosovo being the most important case; addressed pressing issues such as the situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and maintained awareness of region-wide problems.

We paid special attention to developments in *Kosovo*. The 17 November 2001 elections, organized by the OSCE, were the most important event in the province that year, crucial to the building of a multi-ethnic society and to the functioning of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244. Kosovo is one example of the co-operation between the OSCE and the United Nations in the preparation of elections, but also in other areas, such as training of the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) and the judiciary, and the protection of human rights.

The crisis in *the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* was a huge challenge for us and for the OSCE. In co-operation with NATO and the European

Union, we strived to bring about an enduring peace agreement. The OSCE's efforts were directed towards the peaceful stabilization of the situation. After the signing of the Framework Agreement on 13 August 2001, we have been focusing on implementing all its provisions.

We devoted our greatest attention to the situation in *Chechnya*. The Assistance Group's return was one of the major successes of the OSCE in 2001. The measures taken by the Russian authorities to make possible its return are commendable. On 15 June 2001, I inaugurated the office in Znamenskoye in the northern part of Chechnya, and since then all sides have been working to ensure the necessary security conditions for the Assistance Group's staff. This has been a long and difficult process and has opened the way to greater and effective co-operation between the Russian government and the OSCE.

Bringing the *Moldova* file to a conclusion rests upon the shoulders of the Portuguese Chairmanship, nevertheless the Romanian Chairmanship kept continuous track of the developments in this country. The OSCE's priority was to encourage fulfilment of the Istanbul commitments regarding the withdrawal of foreign troops, ammunition and military equipment and to facilitate the negotiation process for a political settlement of the crisis.

In *Estonia and Latvia*, the OSCE Missions provided assistance to the governments in fulfilling the tasks identified in the Chairmanship's Guidelines issued in 2000. During 2001, the two countries made considerable progress towards democratization and naturalization of non-citizens and integration and mutual understanding between ethnic communities. Following the presentation on 13 and 18 December in the Permanent Council of the last activity reports by the two Heads of Mission, recommending the closure of both Missions due to the fulfilment of the Guidelines set by the Austrian Chairmanship, we did not submit a decision to extend their mandates for approval. The technical closure of the two Missions remained the task of the OSCE Secretariat.

We endeavoured to increase international focus on *Central Asia*. Consequently, we emphasized the necessity to reinforce and redirect ongoing OSCE activities while pragmatically taking into consideration the needs and priorities of the countries in the region. At the same time, we encouraged the OSCE Centres in Central Asia to become more active, provide better territorial "coverage" and develop new concrete projects together with the relevant partners in their countries. The goal was to ensure consistency with OSCE objectives in the fields of election legislation, respect for human rights, freedom of expression and belief in parallel with the implementation of new initiatives.

Economic and Environmental Issues

We regarded economic and environmental issues as part of the OSCE's comprehensive approach, as relevant to security, and therefore the strengthening of the economic and environmental dimension of the OSCE was one of our priorities. We continued to promote co-ordination between the participating States, OSCE institutions and missions, and between the OSCE and other partner organizations. The general objective was to identify the most appropriate ways and means of rendering the OSCE's economic and environmental activities more effective, both at headquarters and in the field. As a Troika member, we are determined to maintain our involvement in strengthening the economic dimension, including the organization in Bucharest of a follow-up seminar to last year's Economic Forum.

The Human Dimension

In 2001, we paid increased attention to issues relating to human security, particularly to the security of the individual. This concept covers democracy, respect for human rights and cultural diversity, the fight against violence and organized crime as well as the promotion of the democratic activities of civil society.

The three OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings organized in co-operation with ODIHR were devoted to "Freedom of Expression", "Promoting Tolerance and Non-Discrimination" as well as "Human Rights: Advocacy and Defenders".

At the instigation of the Romanian Chairmanship, the OSCE Informal Group on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men organized a meeting on "Violence against Women" on 8 June.

Likewise, we tried to identify an adequate approach to the issue of the protection of national minorities. Empowering local administrations, involving ethnic minorities in, and giving them free access to, the decision-making process, respecting the fundamental rights of the individual and making citizens' prosperity the central objective of public policy are concrete steps towards an integrated society.

We believe Romania can be considered a model as far as managing the issue of national minorities is concerned, which was given our full attention. My team in Bucharest, in co-operation with ODIHR and the delegation of the European Commission in Romania, organized the "Conference on Roma and Sinti Issues" from 10 to 13 September in Bucharest. Over 300 people attended, including Roma community representatives from all over Europe. The goal of the conference was to draw up recommendations that could form the basis of an OSCE action plan on Roma issues. OSCE-specific recommendations included supporting meetings with governments and NGO part-

ners from outside the OSCE region, including more Romani officers in OSCE missions and strengthening the role of the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues in helping governments and NGOs to monitor anti-discrimination measures.

The annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting offered an opportunity to analyse and assess implementation by the OSCE participating States of the OSCE commitments in the fields of the rule of law, democratic institutions, tolerance and non-discrimination, refugees and internally displaced persons as well as respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms. In the interest of enhancing the effectiveness of the 2001 Implementation Meeting, the modalities for making recommendations were revised. The meeting was regarded as a cornerstone for building confidence and a substantial link to the relevant political agenda of the OSCE.

Conclusion

The result of all our efforts is reflected by the documents of the 3 and 4 December 2001 Bucharest Ministerial Council. That meeting took place in a new climate, in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 events, characterized by solidarity of action in combating new risks and challenges, by an open relationship between the Russian Federation and the United States, by developments in NATO and EU relations with Russia as well as by a consciousness-raising process with regard to the necessity to approach more directly the security concerns of the countries in Central Asia.

The Bucharest Ministerial enjoyed the presence of 64 national delegations, among which were 57 Foreign Ministers from the participating States, the Mediterranean partners and partners for co-operation (including US Secretary of State Colin Powell, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres), high representatives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, OSCE institutions and missions as well as a large number (29) of international organizations and institutions. This active participation was a reflection of their interest for the debates and documents adopted by the Ministerial Council and the recognition of the results obtained by the Romanian Chairmanship. To date, it was the largest Ministerial Council ever organized.

The meeting was an excellent opportunity to take stock of the OSCE's achievements, as well as its difficulties and shortcomings in 2001. The debate was constructive, both in substance and in spirit. There were no major controversies, only differences of position and approach. The discussions were comprehensive and stimulating, contributing to charting the future course of the OSCE.

Combating terrorism was the main topic of discussion, reflecting the solidarity of all participating States and granting prestige to the Organization. Fur-

thermore, new political objectives were set for the future and specific measures were adopted to strengthen the capacity of the Organization.

Several very important documents were adopted, among which in particular, the Bucharest Ministerial Declaration, the Decision on Combating Terrorism and the Bucharest Plan of Action for Combating Terrorism stand out in bold relief. Likewise, there were several statements on regional issues and a Decision on fostering the role of the OSCE as a forum for political dialogue.

All documents were adopted by consensus, setting out agreed tasks for the future. The democracy and transparency of the OSCE were enhanced, both of which are great assets of the Organization. The documents recognized and endorsed the increased role of the OSCE in early warning, conflict prevention and crisis management. The general opinion was that they were on the level of the existing challenges.

The adopted documents reflect the future courses of action of the Organization. From our point of view, we must maintain the OSCE's involvement in combating terrorism, in ending the "frozen conflicts", we must continue the processes of fostering the role of the OSCE as a forum for political dialogue, of strengthening the economic dimension and enhancing the effectiveness of the Human Dimension Meetings.

The Ministerial Council reflected and took advantage of the new spirit of cooperation that emerged from the events of 11 September 2001. At the centre of the discussions were the solidarity of action in combating terrorism and in combining efforts to face up to new risks and challenges.

In view of the substance and importance of its documents and of the constructive spirit of approaching the role of the Organization in the Euro-Atlantic area, which also opened prospects for strengthening its role on the political stage, the Bucharest Ministerial has been one of the most important meetings in the life of the Organization and thus a point of reference. At the same time, the meeting contributed to reinforcing the international partnership created after the terrible events in the United States. It showed clearly that the OSCE was able and ready to listen to and address the concerns of all participating States, with the desire to understand and assist.