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Six Years as OSCE Secretary General: An Analytical and Personal Retrospective

Introduction

The OSCE is an organization like no other: It works as a political process rather than a bureaucracy, fluctuating with the tides of events in greater Europe; it remains a repository of common values and a set of commitments whose ongoing revision and renewal ensures that those values are realized in a changing world; it serves as an instrument for action in support of democratic transition and human dignity throughout its area of responsibility. To serve as Secretary General of such an organization is to be constantly adapting oneself to unexpected circumstances and the perspectives of different Chairmanships (seven during my tenure), drawing on the modest authority of the office and the uneven support of the participating States to keep a highly decentralized and very fragile operation on track. The job mirrors all the characteristics of the OSCE itself: It is vital, unfinished, ambitious, marginalized, experimental, reactive in times of crisis, and both exciting and frustrating for those who are involved in it. It requires total commitment and a great deal of patience and discretion. The following lines are therefore both analytical and personal, seeking to capture the ongoing saga of the OSCE from a unique viewpoint, without the benefit of much hindsight, but with lasting conviction.

At Home in Greater Europe

Recent anniversaries celebrated in the OSCE (thirty-five years since the Helsinki Final Act, twenty years since the Paris Charter and the Copenhagen Document) have reminded those paying attention to the retrospective soul searching of the contrast between the importance of the transformations that have taken place among the 56 participating States during the last three decades and the brevity of this period in historic terms. After the turmoil of the 1990s, the OSCE turned out to be one of the places where the aftershock of those transformations was acutely felt. The unsolved question of the role of the Russian Federation in the security of Eurasia has been at the core of the debates in the OSCE since its origins. From 2005 to 2011, despite attempts to adapt the Organization to the realities of the 21st century, this question of the role of Russia in European security has remained central to the activity of the OSCE, which has retained some of the character it possessed during the post-Cold War process. In other words, the overall atmosphere in the relationship

between the Russian Federation and the United States and their fluctuations, reflecting multiple factors – both domestic and international – remained a key factor. The EU, speaking through a single voice, has been progressively broadening its role, but its impact is still not proportional to its significance or its contribution of political, human, and material resources to the OSCE. The voice of other actors, such as the Caucasus states, Turkey, and Kazakhstan, are also increasingly strong, due to the leverage conferred to them by the consensus rule.

In the Wake of the Dual Enlargements

When I took up my post in June 2005, the tide of NATO and EU enlargement that had changed the face of Europe was still rising. The issue of Georgia was at the forefront of delegates' minds in Vienna, due largely to Tbilisi's continuous initiatives to address the problems of South Ossetia and Abkhazia with a mind to being granted a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP). Coordination within the GUAM group was dynamic, and the US delegation was clearly supportive of the efforts of both Georgia and Ukraine following the Rose and Orange Revolutions. As a consequence, the attitude of the Russian Federation towards its partners in the OSCE and towards the OSCE itself, which had traditionally been quite positive, at least until the Istanbul Summit in 1999, now began discernibly to sour. At the weekly meetings of the Permanent Council, the exchanges between Ambassadors Julie Finley and Alexey Borodavkin became increasingly tense in spite of the energetic leadership of the Belgian Chairmanship, which delivered a remarkably substantial Ministerial in Brussels in December 2006. I witnessed first-hand one of the most visible signs of Russian frustration in February 2007 at the Munich Security Conference, when President Vladimir Putin, in a personal remark, described the OSCE as a "vulgar instrument" being (ab)used to advance Western interests at the expense of those of Moscow and other participating States. The first military incident between Georgia and Russia took place in August of 2007 (destruction of a Georgian unmanned aerial vehicle/UAV). By the end of the year, Russia had announced the suspension of its implementation of the CFE Treaty, which had been negotiated and implemented under OSCE auspices (while not part of the Organization's *acquis per se*) and had served as a pillar of the European security architecture since the end of the Cold War. Throughout the spring of 2008, signs of tension kept accumulating around South Ossetia, and all the elements of early warning were present for the OSCE ambassadors when they visited the area in June of 2008. Perhaps it was no coincidence that the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008 did not offer MAPs to Georgia and Ukraine, although it did affirm their desire to become members of the Alliance.

A Predictable Conflict

The tragic days of August 2008, the first armed conflict between two OSCE participating States this century, shook the Organization, and their consequences remain very much present. The Russia-Georgia relationship is still fraught, making the adoption of any meaningful political document almost impossible.

Although the deployment of twenty OSCE military monitors was approved within a few days of the ceasefire by the Permanent Council and they were deployed within three weeks of start of the conflict, the OSCE was ultimately not the principal organization entrusted with ensuring observance of the ceasefire on the ground. An ad hoc contact format consisting of OSCE, UN, and EU representatives was created in Geneva to serve as a framework for subsequent negotiations on the conflict. The decision to create a new EU monitoring mission seems to have emanated from the French Presidency of the European Union, which was keen to promote EU operations, rather than from the Russian side, and from the decision of the United States to let President Nicolas Sarkozy negotiate an agreement. Russia nevertheless criticized the OSCE for having failed to highlight the activities of the Georgian military in the days preceding the conflict.

Both the confrontation in Georgia in the summer of 2008 and the long-term lack of positive developments in the other difficult protracted conflicts – Nagorno-Karabakh and Transdniestria – made it clear that the unfinished business of the post-Soviet conflicts remains a central OSCE responsibility. The conflict epitomized the fact that Russia would use the tools at its disposal to stop any further dual enlargement at its borders. It also laid bare the practical limits of NATO and EU influence. The enlargement of NATO and the EU, and the willingness of the Western powers to act despite Russian objections (in Kosovo, on missile defence, etc.), had recast the European security architecture during the preceding decade in ways that Moscow felt compromised the principle of the indivisibility of security and ignored its aspirations to be recognized as a full partner in all European security issues.

It is therefore significant that, even before the conflict in Georgia broke out, an initial step had been taken to put the broader pan-European security debate back on the agenda of the participating States of the OSCE. The occasion for this was the speech given in Berlin in June of 2008 by Dmitry Medvedev, the recently installed president of the Russian Federation, who put forward the idea of a new pan-European security treaty that would ensure the indivisibility of security among the 56 participating States. This proposal was discussed informally at the 2008 Helsinki Ministerial at a special ministers' lunch, which led many of the participants to rediscover the merits of the OSCE as an inclusive forum on multidimensional security.

The Greek Chairmanship took the lead in calling for the first ever informal meeting of foreign ministers in July 2009 in Corfu, which ended up

taking place back-to-back with a NATO-Russia Council. This well attended event gave the participants a chance to revisit the whole spectrum of OSCE commitments and to stress the role of the Organization as an inclusive framework where the concerns expressed by Russia could be addressed without recourse to a new treaty. Following these exchanges, the Chairperson-in-Office (CiO) took the lead in calling for a series of ad hoc ambassadorial meetings to revisit each facet of the OSCE's remit and seek to identify potential enhancements. Thus, the Medvedev proposal can be said to have rekindled interest in the OSCE in many capitals, energizing the work of the OSCE in a way that might not have been intended by the Kremlin. It was on the eve of the Athens Ministerial Council that the draft of a treaty on European security was circulated by the Russian president, reminding his partners of key Russian concerns.

By the Athens Ministerial in December 2009, the new US administration had begun to formulate its policies towards Russia and the OSCE, and the so-called "reset" in US-Russian relations was moving forward, fuelled by the negotiations on a new START Treaty. This new environment had a positive impact on the debates in Vienna and facilitated consideration of the proposal made by the 2010 Kazakh Chairmanship to hold an OSCE Summit Meeting. By reaching an agreement with US Deputy Secretary of State Jim Steinberg at the second informal ministerial meeting in Almaty in July 2010 on the holding of a Summit, Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev created the conditions for a decision on the Summit itself, and opened the way for discussion of its content. A hastily arranged review conference, with sessions in Vienna, Warsaw, and Astana, served as a backdrop to solid work on a Summit Declaration and a Framework for Action for the Organization. The NGO community was allowed to participate in these preparations, and significant side events for the NGOs were organized during the Summit itself.

The Spirit of Astana

On 1-2 December 2010, the Kazakh Chairmanship brought together OSCE Heads of State or Government for the first time in eleven years. The Astana Summit was therefore an opportunity not to be wasted. It was successful in seizing the attention of a group of decision makers that is rarely exposed to the OSCE process, in taking advantage of a remarkable political configuration based on close exchanges between the US, the EU, and the Russian Federation, as energized by Kazakhstan, and in giving the Organization a new impetus for the future. The Astana Commemorative Declaration, in which the 56 OSCE Heads of State or Government identified a common vision of a "free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community", is substantial and positive, including comprehensive references to all three dimensions. Reading it, it is clear that while not all

the ambitions of the drafting group were met, there were nevertheless solid achievements. The Astana Commemorative Declaration includes the following: a strong affirmation of OSCE human dimension commitments, including explicit reaffirmation of key provisions of the 1991 Moscow Document and acknowledgement of the important role played by civil society and free media; a commitment to increase efforts to resolve existing conflicts in the OSCE area; forward-looking language on arms control and confidence- and security-building measures, including the concrete expectation of progress in 2011 on conventional arms control negotiations and the updating of the Vienna Document 1999; recognition of the need for greater unity of purpose and action in facing emerging transnational threats; a recognition that the security of the OSCE area is “inextricably linked” with security in the Mediterranean and Asia and a concomitant commitment to enhance co-operation with Partners for Co-operation, and, in particular, to contribute to collective international efforts to promote a stable, independent, prosperous, and democratic Afghanistan; and a commitment to work towards strengthening the OSCE’s effectiveness and efficiency. On the protracted conflicts, Astana saw agreement among the Minsk Group Co-Chairs and the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan on a joint statement on the need to redouble their efforts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. On Georgia, Russia, Georgia, and the Western participating States came closer than they have at any time since August 2008 to agreeing on a concrete OSCE role.

The 56 participating States came close to reaching agreement on the draft Framework for Action, a remarkable nine-page document that attempted to set priorities for the future work of the Organization, but could not do so because of the difficulties in agreeing on a reference to the protracted conflicts, particularly Georgia, that was acceptable to all 56 participating States. The broad agreement reached on this document nonetheless remains and has already proven helpful in guiding the work of future Chairmanships.

In negotiating the Declaration and the Framework, the participating States accepted the need for compromise across dimensions between states with different interests. The Astana texts include paragraphs on freedom of the media alongside ones on energy security and arms control. The overarching concept of a common vision, of a “comprehensive, co-operative and indivisible security community throughout our shared OSCE area”, remains to be defined in detail, but it provides a perspective for the work of the Organization during the coming years. It is no secret that media coverage of the Astana Summit was disappointing and gave a mixed assessment of the Summit results. Regrettably, this is in line with the Organization’s overall lack of visibility.

Since the start of 2011, the Lithuanian Chairmanship has been following the track laid in Astana. The Heads of State or Government acknowledged that much work still needed to be done and explicitly tasked the three incoming Chairmanships of Lithuania, Ireland, and Ukraine to follow up on the

issues agreed upon in the Astana Commemorative Declaration. In January 2011, the Lithuanian Chairmanship immediately picked up the ball, by initiating the informal “V to V Dialogue” (Vancouver to Vladivostok via Vienna and Vilnius) on topics across all three dimensions and dealing with issues of a cross-dimensional character. The hallmark of this dialogue, which is being pursued at both ambassadorial and expert levels with a significant additional contribution by the International Peace Institute, is the same spirit of openness and frankness that characterized the Corfu Process. The goal of the Chairmanship is to generate concrete ideas that will help to move forward the common agenda set by the Astana Summit. The dialogue supports the regular negotiating formats and attempts to pinpoint areas where consensus can be reached at the Vilnius Ministerial Council in December of 2011. Issues that fall under this remit include: strengthening the Organization’s capacity to address all phases of the conflict cycle and transnational threats; the updating of the Vienna Document 1999; enhancing our dialogue on energy security; strengthening confidence-building measures; ensuring the safety of journalists; and many others.

The OSCE therefore seems to have overcome the severe shock of the summer of 2008 and to have gained new momentum thanks to the dedication of three successive Chairmanships. The OSCE lost its presence in Georgia but remains a respected actor in the pan-European security business and has proved to be an effective venue for US-EU-Russian co-operation. It has regained a distinctive profile in the broader security dialogue, as illustrated by the high level of attendance at the 2011 Annual Security Review Conference (including the Secretaries-General of NATO and the CSTO and Janet Napolitano, the US Secretary for Homeland Security). The OSCE remains the framework of reference for the protracted conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh and Transdniestria. The OSCE-related ad hoc formats that have dealt with these conflicts over the years both include the US, Russia, and the Europeans working side by side. It is interesting to see how often it is the parties to the conflicts themselves, rather than the major stakeholders, who seem to thwart the initiatives for compromise.

After a period of diffidence with regard to the Organization, the Russian Federation has been acknowledging that its work is relevant to the overall pan-European security dialogue, which encompasses the Medvedev proposals. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has been, throughout my tenure, the most dedicated participant in Ministerial Council Meetings of all the foreign ministers of OSCE States, and he is an outstanding expert on OSCE issues who follows the work of his delegation closely. If only other delegations also had the benefit of such sustained ministerial attention. With Russia back in a constructive mood with regard to the OSCE, it is vital that the other key players should also be motivated. A major changing of the ambassadorial guard will take place during 2011. The Lithuanian Chairmanship will hopefully find conditions auspicious enough to pull together a number of positive

trends in time for the Vilnius Ministerial Council. The mood in the corridors of the Hofburg, post Astana, is one of pragmatism and caution. Many feel that the Vilnius Ministerial Meeting should result in a concrete and balanced package of decisions that manifests the continued relevance of the Organization. Developments relating to the monitoring by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) of the December 2011 Duma elections will be crucial for the success of the Vilnius Ministerial and the perception that the OSCE remains a unique tool that can guarantee a degree of implementation of human dimension commitments among its participating States.

A Weakened Foundation: CFE and CBMs

A shadow is cast on this moderately optimistic assessment, however, by the uncertainty that prevails in the field of arms control and confidence building, which is a cornerstone of the OSCE edifice. The Vienna Document 99, the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, and the Open Skies Treaty have served as foundations for pan-European security since their entry into force. However, since the Russian Federation suspended its implementation of the CFE Treaty – following years of unsuccessful negotiations over the so-called Istanbul commitments and the ratification of the adapted CFE Treaty – the discussion about renewing the European security dialogue in the field of conventional arms has not been doing well.

In the last year, several meetings of the so called Group of 36 (comprising the 30 States Parties to the CFE Treaty and the six NATO member states who are not parties to the Treaty) have taken place under the leadership of the US Special Representative for Conventional Arms Control, Ambassador Victoria Nuland, and her Russian counterparts, Ambassadors Anatoly Antonov and Mikhail Ulyanov. The discussions were aimed at finding a way to revive the CFE regime, perhaps through a framework document addressing the differing security concerns of the interested states. In spite of all the effort invested in this process, these sessions have not been successful. This discussion has also hampered the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) in its endeavours to achieve successes in the necessary update of the Vienna Document 1999. Although the FSC was formally tasked with developing a Vienna Document 2011 by both the Ministerial Council in Athens and the Astana Summit, this has not resulted in significant progress.

The major change agreed by the parties is a review of the Vienna Document at regular five-yearly intervals, possible improvements of the Document will then be implemented at these intervals. Discussions in the FSC are ongoing and many food-for-thought contributions and suggestions have been made during the last year. Some minor, technical issues have been agreed upon. However, substantial discussion about, for instance, lowering thresholds, increasing inspection quotas, and defining substantial military activities

– which would lead to better and more accurate notifications – have not found consensus. It seems that as long as the wider questions of military transparency and predictability in the framework of CFE do not achieve progress, substantial changes in the Vienna Document 1999 will not be agreed to. How much this stalemate on hard security will be detrimental to the rest of the OSCE's work is hard to assess. Conventional arms control is currently deemed by some key actors (including Russia) to be less important than issues such as co-operation on missile defence, and it may have entered a phase of critical rethinking.

The OSCE: A Flexible and Effective Platform for Action

Despite the difficult political context described above, in 2005-2011 the OSCE has shown an outstanding capacity to adapt to new developments and to transform itself from a process into a real organization entrusted with an explicit project. The multiple elements of this project have been taking shape since 2005. The 2007 Madrid Ministerial Council was a turning point in shaping new developments for the Organization and orienting it towards Central Asia. Similarly, this year's developments among Mediterranean Partners open new perspectives for co-operation between them and the OSCE in the years to come. The capacity of the OSCE system to respond to crises has been remarkable. Implementation of the cross-dimensional security concept is clearly a difficult job, but one in which the OSCE has outstanding – perhaps irreplaceable – assets.

Central Asia and the Partners in the Spotlight

Preparations for the Ministerial Council in Madrid were complex and demanding. While the very active US Ambassador, Julie Finley, was promoting the idea of an OSCE contribution to the stabilization of Afghanistan that would have rendered the OSCE more visible in Washington, Kazakhstan was actively campaigning for the Chairmanship of the Organization. It took skill, patience, and a bit of luck for the Spanish Chair to assemble a package that would shape the course of the Organization for the following years. The pivotal package adopted in Madrid decided who would chair the Organization in 2009, 2010, and 2011 (Greece, Kazakhstan, and Lithuania, respectively). The arguments for and against the decision regarding Kazakhstan polarized the participating States, and the outcome was not certain until the final stages of the meeting. Following the insertion into Kazakh Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin's speech of a number of specific undertakings on domestic reform commitments that had been agreed with the American delegation, the Kazakh Chairmanship was accepted for 2010. This would be a Chairmanship of firsts: the first Central Asian state, the first former Soviet state, the first coun-

try with an OSCE field presence and – a fact often overlooked – the first country with a Muslim-majority population to chair the OSCE. Kazakhstan was also the first state that had to actively convince the majority of participating States that it was entitled to serve as OSCE Chair. The decision on a Kazakh Chairmanship shifted the centre of gravity of the Organization towards Central Asia and opened the way for the Astana Summit, which became the next strategic debate within the Organization.

The other major Madrid decision was the tasking of the Secretariat with responding to a request by Afghanistan for assistance by developing project proposals aimed at improving security on the borders between the Central Asian participating States of the OSCE and Afghanistan, an Asian Partner of the OSCE. The OSCE Secretariat responded quickly and energetically to the task it was handed in Madrid regarding Afghanistan. I personally travelled twice to Kabul for consultations with President Hamid Karzai, while the Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) and other Secretariat staff developed their own connections, and a dedicated task force on Afghanistan was formed within the Secretariat. As a result, a package of 16 concrete assistance projects was designed, in close co-ordination with the UN and other relevant organizations, suggesting a specific role for the OSCE. Most of these projects have subsequently been implemented or are in the process of being enacted, allowing for training of several hundred Afghan border guards and customs and police officers.

The two projects that would have entailed activities within Afghanistan, in the immediate region of the border with Tajikistan, have not been launched to date, given the lack of consensus among participating States on this issue. Setting up those projects and gaining acceptance for them was a major endeavour that mobilized the best talents in the Secretariat for most of a year, demonstrating, along the way, the responsiveness of a lean team of professionals. The OSCE has also provided practical assistance to Afghanistan by deploying ODIHR election support teams on four occasions in 2004, 2005, 2009, and 2010. It is also worth noting that Japan, another Asian Partner for Co-operation, was the first major contributor to support the Afghan projects.

Overall in 2007, the participating States gave a new impetus to the OSCE's relations with its Partners for Co-operation. The Madrid Ministerial Declaration on the OSCE Partners for Co-operation provided for the almost complete inclusion of the Asian and Mediterranean Partners in the OSCE's political dialogue. On the initiative of the Spanish CiO, the Partners for Co-operation were seated around the table and granted practically the same rights as other states to express their views. Following a suggestion I had made in 2005, this intensified political dialogue was supplemented and further strengthened with the establishment of the Partnership Fund. The Partnership Fund has since become instrumental in encouraging the Partners to voluntarily implement the OSCE norms, principles, and commitments, and has sponsored the participation of their representatives, including those from Afghani-

stan, in a variety of OSCE activities. In 2009, at the Athens Ministerial Council, Australia became the sixth Asian Partner, a recognition by a major democratic country of the value of the work performed by the OSCE in the field of security.

Developments in 2011 have confirmed this trend. For all of the frustrations experienced in day-to-day relations among the OSCE's participating States, the Organization remains a source of inspiration for the neighbouring regions because it is inclusive and founded on rich cross-dimensional expertise. The comprehensive toolbox that the OSCE has developed over the years across the three dimensions of security by supporting its own participating States in building and consolidating their democratic institutions could prove beneficial to those Mediterranean Partners that are embarking on an unprecedented transition to democracy. On the initiative of the Lithuanian Chairmanship, the OSCE has offered its support to them and dispatched delegations to Tunis, Rabat, and Cairo with the objective of identifying areas where the OSCE's expertise could provide added value, and concrete co-operation projects could be implemented. Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt have demonstrated genuine interest; the OSCE's concrete contribution will be designed on the basis of the specific requests expressed by individual Partners. While the initial focus is likely to be on elections, the OSCE expertise in areas such as police reform, fighting corruption, media freedom, and capacity building of national human rights institutions might prove essential in the longer term. The intense dialogue initiated with Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt on possible OSCE assistance could contribute positively to making a reality of the commitment, originally undertaken in Helsinki and reaffirmed forcefully in Astana, to address the security of the Mediterranean Partners and the OSCE region as linked and interdependent.

Responding to Crises, Setting the Record Straight

Plentiful and timely warning of the possibility of conflict in Georgia was provided during the spring of 2008. All the participating States could follow the debates in Vienna, which were numerous and explicit. The observers present on the ground performed their duty admirably, as did the remnant of the OSCE Mission to Georgia. The Finnish Chairmanship mobilized the Permanent Council and was engaged on the ground in no time, led by the personal shuttle diplomacy of the CiO and his special envoy. The decision by the EU Presidency to take the lead in brokering a ceasefire and putting together a peace agreement was made outside the OSCE and does not imply that the Organization would not have been capable of performing such a function. Remarkably, the Permanent Council reached consensus immediately after the ceasefire on the deployment of twenty additional military monitors on the Georgian side of the Administrative Boundary Line and kept

open the option to deploy up to 100 more at short notice. The response by the participating States to requests for observers was overwhelming.

This terrible and shocking crisis showed that the entire OSCE machinery can be mobilized quickly and can work effectively together when a crisis requires it. In early October, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), undertook a joint mission to assess the environmental impact of the conflict. In addition, on the request of the CiO and in co-ordination with the Council of Europe, ODIHR and the OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) sent an expert team to assess the human rights and minority situation on the ground. At the political level, the OSCE was designated a co-chair of the International Geneva Discussions, together with the EU and the UN. In November 2008, the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM) organized its fifth OSCE Media Conference in Tbilisi.

All this shows that, when circumstances call for it, efforts can be effectively co-ordinated, and the Permanent Council, CiO, Secretary General, Secretariat, and institutions can work together and deliver. Throughout the crisis, the Secretariat, and the CPC in particular, worked continuously in a task-force format to bring together all the elements of the OSCE response and support the Chairmanship.

Following the conflict, South Ossetia and Abkhazia were soon recognized by Russia as independent states. This had the effect of polarizing the positions of Georgia and Russia, particularly with regard to the responsibilities of any OSCE field operation and on the question of access to the territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Up to the end of 2008, no agreement could be found in the Permanent Council on the continuation of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, although the military monitors were mandated to continue their work until the end of July 2009. This was and remains a regrettable situation, which resulted in the closure of a mission that had been one of the great success stories of the OSCE. To this day, the Chairmanship and the Secretariat are still trying to find a way to overcome this impasse, with successive Chairmanships working continuously and innovatively with the Secretariat and the CPC to come up with acceptable options for re-engagement on the ground. Progress has not been forthcoming, but I remain convinced that a breakthrough on a status-neutral formula for a stronger OSCE involvement acceptable to all stakeholders is desirable and in the clear interest of all. Whatever arrangements might be agreed upon, they should enable the OSCE to enhance its support for the Geneva Discussions as well as the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms in Ergneti, both of which the CPC currently follows from Vienna.

The crisis in Georgia has also demonstrated that the OSCE can act rapidly and flexibly if the participating States want it to. Within two weeks of the outbreak of hostilities in August 2008, the 56 delegations to the OSCE

achieved consensus on nearly tripling the number of military monitoring officers on the ground. The EU took longer to set up its own monitoring operation, and its deployment was far more time consuming. This same case, however, also points to the weakness inherent in the consensus principle, which makes OSCE vulnerable in circumstances where its 56 participating States cannot agree. When the OSCE, including the two parties directly concerned, was no longer able – for the reasons mentioned above – to reach consensus on its presence in Georgia, this left a vacuum that was only partially filled by others. This is the mirror image of the problem confronting the EU, which has been relatively nimble in its internal decision-making, but whose decisions have not carried with them the inherent consent of the Russian Federation (and thereby of South Ossetia and Abkhazia) and which has therefore been unable to gain access to South Ossetia.

The recurrent crises in the Kyrgyz Republic during 2010 also placed great pressure on the Organization and the Secretariat, which, in my view, showed similar responsiveness and imagination in adapting to the specific realities of Central Asia and enabling the deployment of the Community Security Initiative, a completely new tool.

Implementing Multidimensional Security, the Achievements and Challenges of Confronting Transnational Threats

The OSCE concept of multidimensional security was reaffirmed repeatedly during the Corfu Process, and it is shared by many other international organizations. Yet, how to implement this concept remains an open challenge. Should specific strategies be devised that integrate the different dimensions in a co-ordinated way when the OSCE seeks to enhance the security of a given area, taking into account the specifics of each situation? How can the various and not always well connected units within the Secretariat and the institutions be made to devise coherent responses to complex situations?

I believe the OSCE has proved its capacities in at least two formats: its field operations and the unique work of its institutions. The 16 field operations have very different profiles, origins, and contexts, but all of them manage to combine programmes from different dimensions and develop approaches that work in practice as strategies. However, these attempts are rarely reflected in official documents agreed with the host country. Host countries are reluctant to allow the OSCE to maintain a long-term presence on their territories. Each Head of Mission therefore puts together a combination of programmes that reflects the expectations of the various ministries, NGOs, and civil society and seeks to get it approved by both the foreign ministry of the host country and the Permanent Council. Individual participating States have been providing up to 25 million euros a year in voluntary contributions, thus raising the ability of the field offices to carry out their initiatives. The units within the Secretariat and the institutions provide expertise

and involve the field offices in their regular substantive and pragmatic meetings, inserting them into the specialized networks that are one of the great assets of the OSCE

The three institutions are unique among international organizations, with a solid expertise on critical issues of cross-dimensional security. They have the privilege of independent voices. Among ODIHR's many capabilities, I believe the most precious is its capacity to monitor key elections and provide an in-depth assessment of the progress achieved by a given participating State in developing its democratic institutions and practices. In this sense, ODIHR election monitoring comes closest of all the Organization's activities to serving as an implementation monitoring tool. The election process is the tip of the pyramid of security and democracy, a key indicator of good governance. Similarly, the work of the HCNM touches on some of the most sensitive elements of basic security within a state, and this requires very shrewd political judgement. The RFOM is positioned at the cutting edge of the freedoms of the 21st century, with the liberty to remind governments of their duty to ensure the effective implementation of freedom of expression in all media. The institutions are and should remain autonomous in their functioning and judgement, but they can contribute greatly to the OSCE's collective effort to implement its ambitious concept of security. The preparations for the Astana Summit were a moment when this synergy could be felt, and the current work of the Human Dimension Committee is also energizing the debate in this direction. Close co-operation and mutual support in the dialogue with participating States and the consolidation of good practices within the Organization offer ample room for improvement.

Similarly, there is scope for more unity in mobilizing all the means available for combating international crime, which has been racing ahead of the tools available to individual participating States. In the last decade, the Secretariat has developed a number of parallel tracks to address new threats, and has sought to keep them in touch with each other. Integrated thinking about the new threats and challenges is increasing demand from the participating States, who are preoccupied by the rise in cybercrime, drug trafficking, and new forms of trafficking in human beings. The OSCE has developed a toolbox that can be applied in the fields of anti-terrorism, police support, border management, tackling corruption, and combating trafficking in human beings. These activities, supported by small teams located in Vienna, have included regular consultations on cutting-edge issues with participating States, international organizations, and the non-governmental sector, as well as substantive support for programmes implemented by field operations. They have been one of the success stories of the OSCE, developing their own dynamic networks and initiatives and spreading best practices broadly among participating States.

To be successful in responding to the evolving nature of transnational threats (TNTs), the OSCE has continually adapted and improved its TNT-

related instruments, adopting relevant political decisions and strengthening relevant capacities within its executive structures, such as the Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU), the Strategic Police Matters Unit (SPMU), the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB), and the CPC Borders Unit. Now that these capacities have been firmly established and tested, we face a new level of challenges: how to enhance the programmatic coherence and co-ordination of the OSCE's TNT-related work, by clarifying substantive priorities and the respective roles of actors throughout the Organization.

In June 2010, as part of the implementation of the Athens Ministerial Council Decision on *Further OSCE Efforts to Address Transnational Threats and Challenges to Security and Stability*, I prepared a comprehensive report containing specific recommendations. I am encouraged by the high level of attention and interest that participating States have displayed in further improving the Organization's work in this crucial area by exploring potential new activities, e.g. in cyber-security, and by maximizing the overall effectiveness of OSCE TNT work. This is an area where significant progress could be made at the Vilnius Ministerial Council, but it will require a minimum of additional resources to make a difference.

Are the participating States willing to use the OSCE as a laboratory of ideas in cross-dimensional security and to give it an experimental role in supporting the fight against the growing power of criminal groups in many areas? The answer is unlikely to be straightforward, but this is one of the key questions for the future of the Organization.

The OSCE: An Unwieldy Chariot Requiring Attention and Support

One of the priorities of the 2005 Slovenian Chairmanship was to reform the OSCE and make the Organization more effective. Building on the *Final Report and Recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE* in June of 2005, it was expected that the Chairmanship's efforts would focus on improving the governance of the OSCE. Serious discussions led to the Ljubljana Ministerial Council Decision on *Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE*, which requested further elaboration on a broad variety of topics.

The implementation of this decision proved to be one of the greatest challenges of the 2006 Belgian Chairmanship. The decision outlined a roadmap, encompassing nine areas of work, which would reform the Organization. The discussions during 2006 resulted in a number of important Ministerial and Permanent Council decisions on strengthening various aspects of the OSCE's work and effectiveness. While many delegations considered the debate closed at the end of 2006, others have continued to push for further changes. This was particularly evident during the discussion on the "effect-

iveness” of the Organization, as part of the review conference in the run up to the Astana Summit.

An Unwieldy Chariot

The overall governance of the OSCE has always been delicate and has become increasingly complex. Authority in the Organization basically rests with the CiO, who also has the responsibility to lead in shaping a consensus among the participating States. The Organization needs decisions to be adopted continuously whether as part of the budget cycle, to renew the mandates of field operations, to approve the personnel post table, or to adopt new policies or programmes. It is the Secretariat’s duty to assist the Chairmanship in all the steps of this delicate process of keeping together all the components of the Organization. Successive Chairpersons-in-Office represent a diverse group of leaders, each of whom has had their own vision for the Organization and has initially had to familiarize themselves with its intricacies. It is an ad hoc process. Each year, a new leadership team arrives with high expectations, and the Secretariat has to adapt to a new set of contacts with their own personalities and culture. The Secretary General is the direct contact for the ambassador of the country holding the Chairmanship, whom he meets at least once a week, which means that he effectively has to reinvent his role and modus operandi with each new Chairmanship. It is natural that each participating State that undertakes the responsibility of chairing the Organization and invests considerable resources in that process should expect some reward for these efforts and additional visibility for its foreign minister. Many have their own vision of where they would like the Organization to go. However, a common thread does unite each of them: the necessity and the desire to overcome divergent views among the participating States on a range of issues that run across the three dimensions. After an initial period during which they can pursue their ambitions, most Chairmanships are confronted in the second part of the year with the harsh realities of preparing the Ministerial Councils. Throughout this process, the Secretariat has to guarantee continuity and consistency in the work of the Organization and stand ready to accommodate incoming Chairmanships. As long as the responsibility for the guidance of the Organization remains entrusted to the rotating Chairmanship, I believe it will be difficult for the Secretary General to claim a full political role for himself. However, my experience has taught me that the Secretary General can have a discreet and effective political role by playing in the Chairmanship team and reflecting its priorities, while insuring that the basic tenets of the Organization are respected.

Other international organizations may have more stable institutional frameworks, but few have a decentralized structure like that of the OSCE. Each of the OSCE’s twenty-three fund managers has a great deal of effective autonomy, both financially and politically. This is, of course, true of the three

institutions, which promote their programmes directly with participating States and run their own operations with little influence from the Chairmanship and none from the Secretary General. It also applies to the field operations, which negotiate their activities with the various ministries of their host countries, defend their budgets directly in Vienna, and seek extra-budgetary funding on their own. Ultimately, only when the Unified Budget is prepared and then discussed by the Advisory Committee on Management and Finance (ACMF, an increasingly assertive body, which meets frequently) do the chair of the ACMF and the Secretariat have a say in the overall balance and dynamics of the Organization. The budgetary discussions are increasingly the occasion of fierce political negotiations on the details of each fund, a development that has made the timely approval of the Unified Budget less frequent. Thus, the unusual nature of the Organization can be a limitation on the effectiveness of the OSCE, and it is a challenge to make sure that key issues, including those that are apparently “administrative” in nature, receive political attention at the appropriate level.

Staying with the topic of reform, the Brussels Ministerial Council took an important step forward by adopting Rules of Procedure for the Organization, which at least provide a basic structure and procedure for decision making within the OSCE. This marked the first comprehensive codification of CSCE/OSCE Rules of Procedure since 1973. Further efforts following the Brussels Ministerial were dedicated to strengthening the role of the Secretary General and improving the OSCE’s programme budgeting process by introducing Performance-Based Programme Budgeting (PBPB), a results-based management methodology adapted to the needs of the OSCE. PBPB was rolled out across the Organization between 2007 and 2010, enabling the participating States and all managers within the Organization to use a common language to improve planning, implementation, and evaluation of OSCE activities, with a view to achieving maximum impact in times of shrinking budgetary resources. The OSCE thus now has a standardized and up-to-date management framework that protects its flexibility and allows all the different funds to use the same basic elements. Brussels Ministerial decisions also established the three committees of the Permanent Council – the Security Committee, the Economic and Environmental Committee, and the Human Dimension Committee – which are tasked with following the work of the three dimensions. This format has greatly facilitated the work of the Organization.

However, much still needs to be done to enable the Organization to work with greater ease and efficiency. For example, the OSCE’s Financial Regulations, which outline the OSCE’s entire financial management system, are simply outdated. There have been no new amendments since 2000. Admittedly, valiant efforts are ongoing within the relevant decision-making forum, but progress is slow, and no consensus has yet been reached on the revised Financial Regulations. I regret to say that the provisions of the Brus-

sels decisions regarding the role of the Secretary General in co-ordinating the executive structures have proved very difficult to implement. The institutions are attached to their autonomy, and tend to prefer informal conversations on issues of common concern such as the budget. There is therefore no effective mechanism that the Secretariat can use to ensure synergies and rationalizations among the institutions of the OSCE. Chairmanships usually have neither the interest nor the will to get involved in these issues.

In any honest assessment of the state of the OSCE in 2011, one cannot ignore the fact that the leadership of the Parliamentary Assembly has, over the years, pursued a policy of constant criticism either of the PA's co-operation with ODIHR or of the work of the governing bodies in Vienna, who are derided for their lack of transparency and their bureaucratic nature. This internecine sniping is wholly unjustified, and hurts the image of the Organization as a whole. Future co-operation between the PA and the rest of the OSCE should be based on a reasonable complementarity that does not rule out a revision of the responsibilities of the PA as part of the broader discussions on the future of the Organization.

The Elusive Personality

Another matter that has dogged the Organization throughout my two terms as Secretary General is the OSCE's lack of legal personality. Lack of legal personality hampers the work of the Organization in the field and is a source of continuous difficulties in everyday life. The decision reached at the Brussels Ministerial Council in 2006 to task a group of experts with drafting a convention attributing the OSCE with legal personality, international legal capacity, and uniform privileges and immunities was an initial breakthrough. Under the Spanish Chairmanship, a working group led by the Ambassador of the Netherlands, Ida van Veldhuizen, secured agreement on the text of the convention. However it proved impossible to adopt this, as a number of delegations insisted that a constituent document (Charter or Statute) should be adopted in parallel. Despite efforts by several Chairmanships to bring the issue closer to resolution, it is frustrating that no progress has so far been made, and I regret that a lack of agreement has prevented the OSCE from becoming a fully fledged international organization. In spite of this, the OSCE has again demonstrated its flexibility and resilience by continuing to function despite this regulatory gap. The bigger problem is, of course, the question of whether the Organization needs a single constituent document that would bring together the existing Rules of Procedure and the existing Summit or Ministerial decisions while taking into account and respecting the commitments that have been taken by the participating States. The Russian Federation has been promoting such an approach for years, calling for a "Charter", while the US has been consistently hostile to it.

The opening of discussions on this issue, which is supported by the EU, would be a significant breakthrough for the future of the Organization.

New Budgetary Realities.

During my time as Secretary General, the budget of the Organization progressively declined, and the mantra of “zero nominal growth” (a euphemism that masks a policy of gradual decline, as inflation cuts deeper and deeper into the resources available to the Organization) has become more pervasive. Over the years, the trend has been one of regularly decreasing resources for field operations in South-eastern Europe alongside marginal nominal increases for the Secretariat, the institutions, and some of the other field offices under a declining overall ceiling. Although this process reflects the gradual transfer of responsibilities to other organizations (most notably the EU) or is the result of political decisions (closure of the missions in Georgia and Belarus), it also is a sign of the growing pressure being exerted by key participating States on the Organization to cut its overall budget. Regrettably, this message is usually delivered by the delegates to the ACMF, and its long-term policy implications are rarely discussed at ambassadorial level. Those countries that are the most insistent on budget cuts rarely present an overall strategy for adjusting the activities of the OSCE accordingly or cutting certain mandated activities. They are often the same countries that put forward new ideas regarding OSCE activities in areas such as conflict prevention and transnational threats. Although this pattern of behaviour is not exceptional in budgetary processes worldwide, it is destabilizing for the fund managers, who have to deal with quantitative cuts emerging at the last minute during ACMF discussions. The OSCE has been consistently denied the opportunity to debate its longer term priorities, and those discussions on issues of substance that do take place increasingly carry the proviso “within existing resources”. The Secretariat and other fund managers are bound by their detailed mandates, which usually reflect complex negotiations and compromises among participating States, and which they do not have the power to revise on their own initiative. One can only hope that the ambassadors will, at some stage, recognize the seriousness of this situation and find time to work out a more articulate medium-term framework for ensuring that the capabilities of the Organization reflect its complexity and potential

A Squeezed Staff

The OSCE’s human resources are drawn from various sources and work under highly diverse conditions. While the majority of posts in headquarters are contracted and recruited on a competitive basis, the field operations rely largely on seconded personnel and locally contracted agents. Each type of staff has to deal with different challenges.

Contracted personnel are constrained by strict rules as to their maximum periods of service, which are quite short for directors (four years) and professionals (seven to ten years). This results in a high turnover and makes it difficult to retain expertise and develop institutional memory. International recruitment of qualified contracted staff is a cumbersome and time-consuming business that eats up an extraordinary amount of financial and human resources. It is also an invitation for the delegations to interfere politically with the day-to-day operations of the Secretariat. At specific junctures, I therefore pragmatically chose, in close consultation with the Troika, to extend the contracts of a very limited number of experienced individuals who occupied key positions in the Organization for a limited period of time. This was undertaken in order to guarantee the uninterrupted management of the Secretariat and the OSCE and a smooth handover, and was particularly helpful during crisis periods, such as the violence in Kyrgyzstan, or in the run-up to important political events, such as the Astana Summit. I have tried consistently to gain some flexibility from participating States in extending selectively the length of service of key personnel, while maintaining the non-career nature of the Organization. I brought the issue personally to the attention of the participating States in 2005 and again in 2009, and despite the support of many participating States for ongoing attempts to streamline and harmonize the maximum periods of service since then, there is still no consensus on the matter.

Equally problematic is the reliance on seconded personnel to form the backbone of the field operations and to provide some 25 per cent of the human resources of the Secretariat and institutions. On the one hand, a small and declining group of well organized participating States make available high-calibre applicants and provide them with decent support. On the other hand, individuals from other participating States are allowed to join the Organization and live exclusively on the BLA (Board and Lodging Allowance) provided by the Organization and other participating States. This creates major inequalities within the Organization, exposes it to real risks of corruption, and does not guarantee a normal choice of qualified applicants (the number of applicants for seconded jobs rarely reaches half a dozen, while hundreds of candidates apply for each contracted vacancy). If it is to perform the tasks assigned to it, the Organization has to rely heavily on the goodwill of individuals, but it cannot avoid a high turnover of seconded personnel in the larger missions.

Finally, the largest group of people serving the Organization, namely the locally recruited staff in the field operations and the G-level staff in the Secretariat and the institutions, carry the burden of ensuring continuity and stability in much of the work of the Organization with no formal limits on their periods of service. In the field, they do so with salaries that rarely reach the target of 80 per cent of the UN recommended pay scale and are substantially inferior to those offered by other international organizations, such as

the EU. Inevitably, the most capable staff move to other organizations after having received valuable training and experience with the OSCE.

Another important concern for the OSCE is the goal of achieving gender balance at all levels of the Organization. When I took up my post in 2005, the participating States had recently adopted an Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. This provided a mandate for gender mainstreaming in all OSCE activities. Over the years, we have seen some progress in the field of gender equality, both in the Secretariat and within the Organization at large, and I am proud of my record in this field. But, while four out of eleven contracted director-level positions in the Organization are currently held by women, a percentage well ahead of the UN and other comparable international organizations, the progress has not been as far-reaching as it should have been, due mainly to the lack of female candidates for crucial positions such as heads and deputy heads of field operations. There is currently no female among the 16 seconded Heads of Mission. As it happens, the same delegations who advocate in the Permanent Council for greater gender balance at senior levels in the Organization have also lobbied actively for their male candidates. It is up to the participating States to foster a flow of qualified female candidates for leading positions in the Organization, particularly for seconded positions. Only this way can the remaining serious gender inequalities be progressively eliminated.

An Unloved Conductor: The Secretary General

I have often joked that the main asset of the Secretary General is the prestige his title retains for historical reasons in a large part of the OSCE region. In truth, the job of the Secretary General in the OSCE, as I experienced it, is an exercise in variable geometry that depends greatly on the context and the circumstances. Expectations from and personal relationships with the Chairmanships count for a great deal. I have enjoyed close co-operation with a number of Chairmanships that requested the help of the Secretariat in shaping their plans and with whom I interacted closely in implementing those plans. I am proud of what we achieved together. I have also experienced much more control-minded Chairmanships, which were reluctant to share the limelight and their initiatives with the Secretariat and turned out to also be successful. I respect their choices, whatever frustrations they brought me.

The fact is that the OSCE Secretary General has few real prerogatives of his own and many duties towards the Chairmanship and the participating States. In the one area at his discretion, the appointment of contracted personnel in the Secretariat, he has to defend the standards of professionalism against sustained political pressures. While he is accountable to the participating States for the good management of the entire Organization and the proper implementation of the rules and regulations within it, the tools at his disposal are quite limited in a system that places great emphasis on decen-

tralization and where there are few incentives to encourage loyalty to the Organization as a whole. Most of the Organization's "barons" view the Secretary General with some suspicion and keep their distance. The support he gets from the ambassadors tends to be mixed, with some welcome exceptions.

Yet, when a crisis occurs, the role of the Secretary General as a catalyst for the efforts of the entire Organization becomes central. The Secretary General is in a position to mobilize the diverse talents that exist within the Secretariat and to reach out to the participating States to help the CiO shape the Organization's response. My most active periods in the job have been linked to crises in Georgia, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Albania as well as to the preparations for the Astana Summit. The Secretary General can discreetly build a position of "soft" influence, thanks to his network of contacts in capitals and the in-depth knowledge of issues he acquires over time. His position in Vienna, in direct contact with the ambassadors and the CiO, allows him, with some patience, to gain some leverage over other fund managers. One of my most difficult tasks has been to help the CiO deal with Heads of Mission who diverged from the good practices of the Organization, regrettably not an infrequent occurrence over the past six years.

What Role for the OSCE Among Today's European Organizations?

From my first day as Secretary General, I was preoccupied with the OSCE's relationship with other key international organizations. All of them are pulling in the same direction, all experience the same problems in building up support and authority, all are in the process of having to constantly reinvent themselves. It would be unrealistic to say that there is no competition among them, but relationships vary widely. Relations with the UN and its family are fairly easy because of the similarity in values and practices and the procedures that already exist. This is also the case with organizations such as NATO and the CSTO, whose remit is clear and complementary to that of the OSCE.

Things are different with respect to the European Union. Based on values identical to those of the OSCE, seeking to develop its own foreign and security policy, and disposing of several bureaucratic bodies, the EU has been making continuous progress in many of the areas of direct relevance to the OSCE. The EU has been speaking with a single voice in Vienna since 1993. The relationship between the two organizations is an unusual one of complementarity, competition, and asymmetry. The OSCE provides an open playing field where the EU can build up its common positions and policies and co-operate with partners such as the US, Turkey, and Russia. The EU is a major financial contributor to the field activities of the OSCE. The implementation of the Lisbon Treaty creates an opportunity for the EU to become a far more engaged and constructive force within the OSCE. The Astana Summit was illustrative of this. For the first time, the so-called "triangle" nego-

tiation format of the Russian Federation, the EU, and the US was used extensively before and during the Astana Summit. It proved to be an effective tool by which to develop consensus on contentious issues, although this achievement was ultimately marred by disagreements within the EU itself, resulting in unfortunate “interpretative statements” at the closing plenary, which shaped public perceptions of the Summit’s results.

Altogether, I believe that this is the way of the future. The EU as such has to be present and active in the OSCE and should use the OSCE format as often as possible to perform some of the security-building tasks it sets itself. During my tenure, I visited Brussels regularly, addressing the Political and Security Committee (PSC) twice a year, where I regularly reiterated my view that it is regrettable that the EU machinery and some of its member states at times still view the OSCE as a competitor rather than an effective forum for engaging with the area east of Vienna, and the OSCE’s partner states, on an equal basis. The EU member states, as represented by their delegations in Vienna and the ever stronger EU delegation to the OSCE, have the opportunity to ensure that the Organization plays a role in areas across the three dimensions where the EU has important interests, but neither the relevant expertise nor the field presence needed to accomplish its goals. The EU can also identify opportunities where the two organizations can increase their combined effectiveness by working together. This is all the more relevant given that EU member states make up 27 of the 56 participating States and provide over 70 per cent of the annual unified budget. Furthermore, over two-thirds of the OSCE’s seconded staff and about half of the international contracted staff in the OSCE Secretariat, institutions, and field operations are from EU member states.

In a smaller way, a challenge also exists in finding a sustainable, long-term *modus vivendi* between the Council of Europe (CoE) and the OSCE. The CoE claims to have a central role in promoting democracy across greater Europe and is refurbishing its network of field operations along the lines of the OSCE’s longstanding practice and drawing substantial resources from the EU. Clearly a potential for overlap and competition between the two organizations exists.

It is up to the participating States that are also EU and CoE member states to determine what they expect from each organization and how they should build up mutually supportive relationships. This is made more urgent by the budgetary restrictions which constrain donors. But in making their choices, the participating States (particularly those within the EU) would do well to bear in mind that a number of partners who are not at the CoE table – including the US, Belarus, and the Central Asian states – can be engaged through the OSCE.

Remaining Relevant in Capitals and with Public Opinion

The OSCE has an impressive historic record, and the job it was set up to do is far from being completed. The great vision contained in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act of a rules-based international order stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, and the challenge and hopes of the 1990 Paris Charter, for “a new era of democracy, peace and unity” remain powerful aspirations echoed by developments among the partner countries. Yet the attention devoted to the OSCE in most chanceries is modest. More often than not, the OSCE is handled by the “hard-security” departments, making it difficult to promote its cross-dimensional remit. Because it has a rich toolbox and an intricate structure, the Organization is difficult to understand. It is best known to a small group of “aficionados” who have served in Vienna, and is rarely mentioned at the higher policy levels. The Ministerial Councils – along with the too-infrequent Summits – are the one annual opportunity to attract the attention of ministers, and they are not always well attended. A Summit represents a chance to put the OSCE on the radar screens of Heads of State or Government, who are constantly mobilized by many other similar events.

Since the OSCE cannot count on a natural lobby, it needs a constant effort of outreach and promotion. The Secretary General has to be in regular contact with all those who are involved in various aspects of the OSCE’s work and to seek every opportunity to present it at the higher policy level. I have sought to do so. It is equally important for the voice of the OSCE to be heard in the conference circuit, which plays a significant role in shaping perceptions and policies. The OSCE needs continuous support from think tanks and the academic sector. The role played by institutions such as the Centre for OSCE Research (CORE) in Hamburg has been essential in the new analytic and reflexive phase that the OSCE has been going through since 2009. The opening of an office of the International Peace Institute in Vienna is also a very welcome development. A number of projects revisiting transatlantic and pan-European security are paying attention to the OSCE, which in many ways has been serving as a prototype for the emerging pattern of global governance. Since the international community is going through a period of transition and reinvention, it is important that the values and experience of the OSCE remain present in the debate.

I believe the OSCE lacks a major outreach event along the lines of the World Economic Forum, which would bring it vital visibility. In a different way, the OSCE also lacks a successor to the defunct International Helsinki Federation, which would play a strong advocacy role and assist the now fragmented network of Helsinki Groups. It cannot rely on a network of non-governmental donors to support its activities, particularly in the field.

Outside of brief moments of crisis, the image of the OSCE is weak and blurred, in spite of the innovative work of the Press and Public Information Section in Vienna. This is because of the inherent complexity of the Organ-

ization and the long-term nature of its work. There is also a surfeit of international organizations competing for attention and support for similar causes, which are often unintelligible to the general public. A success story on the occasion of a resolved conflict would certainly put the OSCE back in the limelight, but a continuous flow of less dramatic but still tangible achievements well reflected in all forms of media is a prerequisite for a sharper image.

By way of a conclusion, I would stress that the OSCE's unique role as an inclusive forum for dialogue among a very diverse group of states is still needed – perhaps more than ever. The divergence of views among the participating States is evident each week at Permanent Council meetings, yet it is precisely those differences that underscore the continued need for the OSCE. Participating States accept the peer pressure inherent to the continuous exchanges, and all are keen to continue this dialogue in a forum where their voices carry equal weight (a fundamental feature of the OSCE that is not replicated in NATO or the EU). Throughout my time as Secretary General, I have repeatedly made the point that the OSCE is a light structure, flexible and resilient, but also essentially fragile. In many respects, it remains more a project than an institution. It seeks to achieve demanding long-term objectives while relying on short-term instruments. It is a high maintenance, complex project, and one that requires a high degree of sustained engagement predicated on the faith and dedication of those who serve it, delegates and staff of all kinds equally. If it is to carry out the mission entrusted to it at the December 2010 Astana Summit and implement the tasks of specific interest to individual participating States, it needs the appropriate political and financial resources. It cannot afford to be left to benign neglect. If it is, its relevance may indeed diminish. Taking this project forward is an exciting and demanding job for all of us, and I have found it to be a task that is truly worthwhile. I wish the best to my successor, Lamberto Zannier, in bringing forward this fascinating task.