

*Eamon Gilmore*

## Foreword by the Chairperson-in-Office

*Helsinki +40: Back to the Future*

When I addressed the Permanent Council at the start of Ireland's Chairmanship, I committed to pursuing the principles and aims of the OSCE – promoting a peaceful and secure environment for all our citizens – in a balanced and pragmatic manner. I set out our priorities for the year along with realistic expectations for what could be achieved in twelve months.

We have made much progress, and have left the Organization with a new mid-term vision in the form of the Helsinki +40 process, a multi-year process for the incoming Chairmanships to take forward as we approach the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in 2015. Further efforts by all participating States are still required to advance our shared aim of a common, comprehensive, and indivisible security community, and there remain worrying tensions in parts of our region. Therefore, as we look forward to 2015 and develop a new path, we should also look back on the great achievements made since the Cold War tensions of the 1970s and renew our commitment to the principles that made such progress possible.

The year was framed by two developments that reflect the OSCE's ability to adapt to changing needs and realities. The first was the official closure of the OSCE Office in Zagreb in January. The successful implementation of the Office's mandate in assisting in Croatia's democratic development is a positive sign and concrete demonstration of the OSCE's capacity to help participating States, and is undoubtedly a success story. Towards the end of the year, we welcomed Mongolia as the 57th participating State. This will strengthen the Organization's work in this important region, as well as helping Mongolia to reinforce its democratic development.

The successful facilitation of voting by Serbian citizens in Kosovo in May again showed the Organization's flexibility and ability to respond rapidly to emerging situations, while also demonstrating the vital role of its network of field missions. This task was carried out with great skill, and I congratulate Secretary General Zannier and his team for the contribution they made to that electoral process. As we adapt and review the role of our various field presences to changing conditions, we should remember the enormous added value they give to our work and the capacity they provide us with for response on the ground.

I gave a commitment at the start of the year that Ireland would share its experience of conflict resolution as Chair-in-Office. I was delighted to host a major conference on this theme in April in Dublin. This was not only an opportunity to share lessons learned with other OSCE States, but also repre-

sented the first time that so many of those directly involved in the peace process, from all sides, had had the opportunity to come together and reflect on their joint achievements. At that conference, I offered to provide more detailed briefings on the Northern Ireland peace process, which we have done on a number of occasions this year, for example through a visit organized to Dublin and Belfast in May for the chief negotiators of the sides in the Transnistrian settlement process. Ireland remains ready to offer further briefings to those involved in negotiations in the future.

I am happy to report that some progress has been made in relation to the Transnistrian settlement process. Five meetings in the framework of the settlement process took place this year, the last in November at Farmleigh House in Dublin. This marks a considerable activation of the process since the resumption of official talks one year ago in Vilnius, after a gap of almost six years. Under the able chairmanship of my Special Representative, Ambassador Erwan Fouéré, the participants agreed on key principles and procedures for the conduct of negotiations, as well as on an agenda for the negotiating process. I look forward to negotiations taking place in all three baskets, with the view to achieving a comprehensive settlement. Increased engagement between the sides has also been marked by positive developments on the ground, such as the resumption of railway goods traffic in April.

The adoption of a decision on the Transnistrian settlement process at the Ministerial in Dublin provides timely political impetus for the continuation of the good progress made in 2012. I hope that all concerned will work to maintain this momentum. I know that our Ukrainian colleagues are approaching their task of chairing these negotiations next year with seriousness and determination, and I wish them well in advancing the process towards a comprehensive settlement.

The Geneva International Discussions, now in their fifth year, have proved their value as a forum to address security, stability, and humanitarian issues in the aftermath of the 2008 war in Georgia. My Special Representative, Ambassador Pádraig Murphy, contributed significantly to these discussions as Co-Chair on behalf of the OSCE, as well as co-facilitating the Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism, of which there have been no fewer than 13 meetings in 2012.

These meetings are vital to ensure calm and stability on the ground. Unfortunately, no meetings of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism have taken place since March – I hope that meetings can be resumed as soon as possible.

The upsurge in violent clashes in April and during the summer on the line of contact and on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, as well as other worrying developments, show clearly the continuing and urgent need for progress to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. I call on all sides to engage seriously with each other and with the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group to end this conflict, which has brought suffering to the people of the region for too long.

I wish to thank my Personal Representative, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, for his untiring efforts to safeguard the ceasefire and contribute to progress towards a resolution of the conflict.

In the politico-military dimension, I would also like to note the progress achieved under our Chairmanship on addressing transnational threats, with a package of decisions on policing, drugs, information and communications technology (ICT) security, and counter-terrorism adopted in the Permanent Council and endorsed by the ministers, which will guide our efforts in the coming years. The deadly terrorist attack in Burgas in Bulgaria earlier this year was a grim reminder that none of our states is immune from this threat.

One of the most effective ways of tackling crime and terrorism is to follow the money. As part of our efforts to champion good governance this year as the theme of the 20th Economic and Environmental Forum, we looked at ways of countering corruption, money-laundering, and terrorist financing. We also shared our national experience in the area of the seizure of criminal assets and highlighted the vital role of whistleblowers and the need to ensure their adequate protection. Good progress was made throughout the year, culminating in the Declaration on Strengthening Good Governance at the Dublin Ministerial Council. At the core of this declaration of support for promoting good governance and transparency is the reaffirmation that the rule of law and respect for human rights are crucial to creating a climate necessary for positive economic and social development.

While the OSCE already has a very rich and progressive human rights acquis that remains to be implemented, I am disappointed that for the second year running, we were unable to find consensus on any decisions in the human dimension at the Dublin Ministerial Council. Civil society representatives I met with on the margins of the Ministerial highlighted the particularly worrying situation for human rights defenders in many parts of our region. We must try harder in the years to come to avoid putting narrow political and national interests above our commitment to and support for the very principles on which this Organization was founded, where human rights are an integral part of comprehensive security.

Nevertheless, as Chair I believe that Ireland was able to make important advances in the dialogue on some key human-dimension issues. Internet freedom was one of our priorities, and we held a conference on the topic in Dublin Castle last June, which provided an excellent opportunity for debate among the 280 participants from participating States, civil society, academia, media groups, and the ICT industry. One message that emerged very strongly from the debate is the clear recognition that OSCE commitments in all three dimensions apply across all mediums and regardless of technologies. While I regret that consensus was not found on the proposed Ministerial Council declaration on fundamental freedoms in the digital age, there is growing support for its principles among OSCE States, and when I signed the declaration on the margins of the Ministerial Council, Ireland became the 48th OSCE

participating State to do so. Discussion is always a prelude to decision-making, and I believe we have made the case for internet freedom strongly and loudly, giving support to journalists, bloggers, and citizen voices throughout our region. We must continue to push for change to protect media freedom, heeding the warnings and advice of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, with whom we have closely worked this year.

Another of our priorities was tolerance and non-discrimination. In a year that saw the hosting of the UEFA European Football Championship in Poland and Ukraine and the Olympic Games in the United Kingdom, we highlighted the key role that sport can play in countering manifestations of racism, intolerance, and discrimination in society. Holding a Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on this topic in co-operation with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in April, I believe we were able to give new prominence to this issue and raise awareness of both the problem and the potential ways the international sporting community and individual states can address it.

Despite progress in dialogue and decisions, it is clear that much work remains to be done if we are to achieve the vision of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community set out in Astana in 2010. While the year ended with many unresolved matters, and lack of consensus on important issues, we also united in identifying the need to work on our future path over the coming Chairmanships. By initiating the Helsinki +40 process, I believe Ireland has set the OSCE on a course for future success. Through the hard work that I have observed for myself this year by the OSCE Secretariat, institutions and field operations, I am confident that when we take stock of our achievements in 2015 we will see tangible results. I take this opportunity to wish Ukraine, Switzerland, and Serbia every success as they take on the challenge of chairing the Organization in the years to come.