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Strength in Numbers: Co-operating with Other International Organizations

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a paradigm shift in multilateralism. Emerging economies have challenged the balance of power in international relations, with new groupings questioning the traditional dominance of certain states. Examples include the rise of the G20 to rival the G8, and the demand for reform of the UN Security Council. Our increasingly interconnected world has also seen the development of new international organizations, particularly at the regional level. At the same time, with the global economic crisis, competition for diminishing resources is tighter. In this context, the arguments for international organizations to co-ordinate action and policies, pool resources, and avoid duplication of efforts – which I believe make sense in and of themselves – are more compelling than ever.

As an organization that promotes security through co-operation among countries and between people, interaction with other international organizations to achieve shared goals is a natural part of the OSCE's *modus operandi*.

The Basis for OSCE Co-operation with Other International Organizations

The formal basis for the OSCE's co-operation with other international organizations derives from Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which encourages member states that have entered into regional security arrangements such as the OSCE to "make every effort to achieve pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies before referring them to the Security Council". It also gives the Security Council authority to utilize such regional arrangements for enforcement action under its authority and requires that the Security Council "be kept fully informed of activities undertaken or in contemplation under regional arrangements or by regional agencies for the maintenance of international peace and security".

As it became clear that, as a consequence of the progressive institutionalization of the OSCE, there was a need for a more effectively articulated policy governing external relations, the Platform for Co-operative Security was developed and adopted at the Istanbul Summit (1999). The goal of the Platform is to "to strengthen the mutually reinforcing nature of the relationship between those organizations and institutions concerned with the promotion of comprehensive security within the OSCE area". It outlines a set of principles and modalities for other security-related organizations to work co-

operatively with the OSCE, including a declaration that their members are “ready in principle to deploy the institutional resources of international organizations and institutions of which they are members in support of the OSCE’s work, subject to the necessary policy decisions as cases arise”. The participating States singled out “the particular relevance of co-operation in the areas of conflict prevention and crisis management”. The Platform also recognizes the growing importance of subregional groupings in the work of the OSCE and supports a corresponding growth in co-operation with them.

This document thus provides a strong framework for the OSCE’s co-operation with other organizations. The OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21st Century, adopted in Maastricht in 2003, further highlights the OSCE’s strategy of co-operation: “The OSCE seeks to expand its relations with all organizations and institutions that are concerned with the promotion of comprehensive security within the OSCE area, and has established regular patterns of consultation at both the technical and the political levels with a number of them, *inter alia*, the UN, EU, NATO and the Council of Europe.” It further recognizes the need to continue this process of co-operation to meet new threats and realities: “The OSCE needs to remain flexible in order to be able to co-operate with different organizations as their capabilities and focus may change over time, with developments in perceptions of threat and organizational capacities.” As the world’s largest regional security organization, the OSCE is a natural bridging point for co-operation with other international organizations at both the regional and global level.

Co-operation in Action

Having the framework is one thing – ensuring that co-operation happens on the ground is another. As the agenda of the OSCE has evolved, so has the need to develop relations and partnerships with external actors. This is particularly true in relation to the more global security challenges (terrorism, trafficking, organized crime, environmental degradation, and non-proliferation, to mention just a few) where strategies co-ordinated on a broad front are called for. No individual nation or individual region can act alone. Similar considerations apply to dealing with complex conflicts, where the engagement of various actors is often necessary both for political reasons and to ensure that different aspects of the conflict are handled by the most relevant and appropriate arbitrator. As a consequence of this, the OSCE has established good practices of co-operation with international partners.

One of the most long-standing examples of this successful interaction is the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, which has operated under UN Security Council Resolution 1244 within the overall framework of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) as the lead pillar on institution- and democracy-building and human rights and rule of law. When

political tension rose early in 2012, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo responded to calls from the international community and the relevant authorities to facilitate balloting for eligible voters in the Serbian presidential and parliamentary elections. Long-standing inter-organizational relations enabled the OSCE Mission to work easily within an agreed framework with the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) as second-level security providers in support of the Kosovo Police.

Another example is the successful co-operation the OSCE has developed with both the European Union and the Council of Europe across South-eastern Europe, including, for instance, in the implementation of the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with the EU and NATO and on local government issues in the region with the Council of Europe.

The UN, EU, and OSCE jointly chair the Geneva International Discussions that were set up following the August 2008 conflict in Georgia, and the same three partners co-operated during the unrest in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 through a co-ordinated mechanism of high-level envoys.

In the economic and environmental sphere, the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC), launched in 2003, is another example of successful inter-organizational co-operation. A partnership of six international organizations – the OSCE, the Regional Environment Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and NATO as an associated partner, ENVSEC aims to contribute to the reduction of environmental and security risks through strengthened co-operation among and within countries in Central Asia, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and South-eastern Europe. The OSCE has recently taken the lead as a fund manager within this initiative.

At an awareness-raising level, the annual OSCE-led Alliance against Trafficking in Persons provides a forum for joint advocacy efforts by international and regional organizations.

These are just some examples of how the OSCE can add value and strengthen action on the ground through working partnerships, and the range of models for co-operation demonstrates the flexibility of the OSCE in its approach to interaction with other international organizations.

International Co-operation and the OSCE Partners for Co-operation

With the OSCE 2003 Maastricht Strategy, the participating States also agreed to intensify co-operation with the OSCE Partners for Co-operation and to consider ways for sharing OSCE norms and values with neighbouring regions in order to spread security. The Strategy specifically mentioned that contacts

with organizations in these regions should be developed. This has also resulted in practical interaction with other regional organizations. For instance, in September 2011, I visited the headquarters of the League of Arab States (LAS) in Cairo to offer the OSCE's support to its partners in the wake of the Arab Spring, and this year I had a meeting with the Secretary General of ASEAN and visited the headquarters of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Jeddah.

At the 2011 OSCE Ministerial Council (MC) in Vilnius, I met with representatives of the LAS and the OIC alongside my counterparts from the EU, NATO, the Council of Europe, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) to discuss responses and the sharing of best practices and expertise in relation to the developments in the southern Mediterranean. The OSCE will deepen its interaction with the LAS by holding an expert-level meeting in February 2013 where the OSCE institutions and thematic units will share expertise on a range of issues, presenting materials in Arabic. The 2012 Mediterranean Conference in Rome in October reflected the interests and views of the Partners across the region, with particular emphasis on sharing best practices from the OSCE on developing the economies of countries in democratic transition and undergoing political reforms.

In two decisions taken in Vilnius, the participating States indicated their desire for closer co-operation between the OSCE and other international organizations in our work with the OSCE Partners for Co-operation:

In MC Decision No. 5/11 on Partners for Co-operation, the participating States decided "in the context of the Partnership, to increase the efforts to promote OSCE norms, principles and commitments through the contacts in co-ordination with other relevant regional and international organizations, particularly the United Nations notably through the sharing of best practices and experiences and through joint projects and activities in all three dimensions, as appropriate".

This decision also tasked me, as Secretary General, "in consultation with the OSCE Chairmanship, with exploring possible options for action oriented and results based co-operation with Partners, in co-ordination with the United Nations and other relevant regional and international organizations and institutions, and with making proposals, as appropriate, for further action by the Permanent Council".

In MC Decision No. 4/11 on Strengthening OSCE Engagement with Afghanistan, the participating States acknowledged "the primary role of the UN in international efforts in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan, as well as the valuable contribution of relevant regional and international organizations and institutions actively engaged in assisting Afghanistan, *inter alia*, NATO, EU, CSTO, CICA and SCO". It also underscored "the importance of co-ordination of these efforts and avoiding duplication, including through making best use of existing mechanisms for co-ordination", and

tasked the OSCE executive structures with co-ordinating efforts to further strengthen the OSCE's engagement with Afghanistan.

To further this, the OSCE organized a conference in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in February 2012, to discuss how we can build synergies between regional organizations and further engage with OSCE partner countries to tackle shared security threats, including those emanating from Afghanistan.

A stronger partnership with those organizations present on the ground in Afghanistan can help us to better target and evaluate our activities. Such partnership is also essential in order to firmly embed the OSCE's efforts within the framework of larger UN endeavours, led in Kabul by former OSCE Secretary General Ján Kubiš, now the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Co-operation with The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and its Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries, which provides valuable support in the area of countering narcotics, is also relevant in this context.

Dealing with Afghanistan-related issues requires close co-operation with a very broad spectrum of actors. With this in mind, as we approached an important internal debate on reorienting our policies in Central Asia to better reflect issues related to Afghanistan, I organized an informal meeting with heads of OSCE field operations, officials from the Central Asian participating States and Afghanistan, and international and regional organizations after the Fifth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference for Afghanistan (RECCA V) meeting at the end of March 2012 in Dushanbe. This allowed us to factor into our policies recommendations and advice from our key institutional partners and ensured that our planning process was fully transparent to both host countries and all relevant external actors.

Our package of Afghanistan-related activities, including training for border personnel at our Border Management Staff College (BMSC) in Dushanbe, international patrolling along the borders, support of counter-terrorism and anti-drug trafficking activities, and support for women entrepreneurs, is continuing to provide valuable support to Afghanistan while ensuring that the OSCE's work complements the work of the international community on the ground in Afghanistan rather than duplicating it.

The participating States have repeatedly emphasized the intrinsic link between the security of OSCE Partners for Co-operation and the security of the OSCE region. Co-operation ensures not just that the lessons we have learned over decades of work in transition and post-conflict counties are not lost, but also that the OSCE region benefits from their application in neighbouring areas. Strong inter-organizational co-operation beyond our regional borders is an effective way of achieving this.

Future Directions

There are several discussions currently underway within the OSCE and partner organizations on how best to move forward with strengthening our co-operation. The Helsinki +40 process, launched by the 2012 Irish Chairmanship to pave the way forward for the Organization, gives us new impetus to examine our interaction with others as we mark the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. As part of this initiative, the Irish Chairmanship commissioned Lars-Erik Lundin, former Head of the EU Delegation to the International Organizations in Vienna and now Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Security and Development Policy, to write a food-for-thought paper on the OSCE's relationship with other international organizations. The paper has much to offer, with practical suggestions that emphasize the need for a goal-oriented approach. Establishing liaison offices in Brussels and elsewhere to give higher profile and more immediate interaction with the EU and other bodies is just one of the ideas that deserve to be explored further. In a crowded field of international organizations, it is imperative that the OSCE make its unique expertise more widely known. It is for this reason that I have stressed the importance of increasing the OSCE's visibility. For the same reason, this year I attended the high-level segment of the UN General Assembly for the second time, where I held over 35 meetings, many at the ministerial level, with OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation, and with senior counterparts from international organizations. I also delivered statements at a number of multilateral events on its margins. The presence of many senior government and international officials provided me with an excellent opportunity for a high-level dialogue and for enhancing the visibility of the OSCE in a cost-effective way.

Improved co-operation does not mean that the OSCE should cease to take the lead in areas where it has traditionally been at the forefront of international support. Our field presences have built up invaluable experience and connections with the host countries over the years, and have created a deep sense of trust with communities and governments where the OSCE is present. In the fight against trafficking in human beings, the OSCE has the highest-level position of any international organization specifically dedicated to countering this threat. In election observation, the OSCE has long-standing experience and capacity and an internationally recognized methodology. Similarly, we should recognize areas where other organizations are better placed to achieve common goals, and provide support to their lead. For example, the UNODC initiated the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention), which has been endorsed by the OSCE participating States. While UNODC remains the custodian of the Convention and its Protocols, the OSCE is helping states implement it in its region, through various capacity-building workshops and legislative support. The OSCE's field operations provide an obvious channel through which to sup-

port implementation of many international standards on OSCE-relevant areas, and as we develop the OSCE's capacity to tackle transnational threats, I foresee the OSCE taking an ever greater role in collective international efforts to meet these challenges.

The Lundin report recommends focusing on a "limited number of priority organisations". It is clear that the OSCE can and should continue to develop deeper co-operation with organizations such as the UN, but also the European Union, the Council of Europe, and NATO, where there is clear overlap on a number of priority areas and where we have a long-standing history of successful co-operation, including in times of crisis. But that is not to say that we should neglect the opportunities for other constructive partnerships. Indeed, the report recognizes that we have the comparative advantage of a wide membership, which is true both geographically with respect to the political, security, social, religious, and cultural diversity in the OSCE region and its partner countries, and this, alongside the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, is exactly why the Organization is well positioned to build new partnerships with organizations such as the CICA, the CSTO, the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States to name but a few.

Conclusion

As the security challenges faced by OSCE participating States grow in complexity, they increasingly require shared strategies and strong partnerships on a broad front. This emerged in all clarity at a retreat with heads of international organizations hosted by the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, in New York in June 2012. On that occasion, I strongly underscored the need for the UN to take the lead, but also for it to work more closely and more efficiently with all relevant regional organizations. Transfer of experiences and good practices among regional organizations in different regions should also be encouraged. And stronger relations should lead to more visible and permanent engagement to ensure continuous and timely exchange of information and practical interaction.

As we move forward with developing the Helsinki +40 agenda, there is an opportunity for the OSCE to extend its co-operation, deepening engagement with existing partners while reaching out to new ones.

We look to friends in times of crisis. We do not always know where the next crisis will happen or what the best approach to it will be. If we have an enlarged network of partners, then we can mutually reinforce our efforts and call upon those with the most knowledge and regional expertise to act in a given situation. Inviting high-level representatives to address our Permanent Council, sending OSCE representatives to the events of other organizations,

and participating in working-level meetings are small but significant steps in this process of getting to know each other's strengths and sharing expertise for the benefit of all. If we build good relations now, we can call upon others to join our efforts as trusted partners when times are tough. With the concerted efforts of all relevant international organizations, we can better meet the challenges, old and new, to create a more secure and prosperous future for all.