

Leonid Kozhara

Foreword by the Chairperson-in-Office

In assuming the Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Ukraine was determined to promote a common vision, common goals, and common actions, to bridge divergences and to strengthen trust and confidence, so that we could all move further towards a shared vision of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community.

In this vein, our priorities were to set a “co-operative agenda” that would encourage positive engagement on the part of all participating States. We paid particular attention to issues such as protracted conflicts, the Helsinki +40 Process, trafficking in human beings, non-proliferation, transnational threats, the environmental footprint of energy-related activities, media freedom, freedom of religion or belief, freedom of movement, Roma and Sinti, and OSCE engagement with Afghanistan.

Writing these lines in mid-December, after the successful Kyiv Ministerial Council, I note with satisfaction that we succeeded in building consensus in the majority of these areas.

We have launched the Helsinki +40 Process – a promising framework engaging all participating States in an open informal dialogue aimed at clarifying the OSCE’s role in the evolving security environment and strengthening its capacities to respond effectively to current security threats and challenges. Frank discussions in five thematic areas – OSCE effectiveness and efficiency, conventional arms control, protracted conflicts, the economic and environmental dimension, and the implementation of the OSCE commitments – generated valuable ideas.

In Kyiv, the OSCE ministers reaffirmed their strong commitment to the Helsinki +40 Process, which has raised expectations leading up to the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of the Helsinki Final Act in 2015. I believe that efforts to implement the Helsinki +40 roadmap, which has been prepared by the three consecutive Chairmanships of Ukraine, Switzerland, and Serbia, will be instrumental in translating relevant ideas into reality.

Ukraine placed the issue of protracted conflicts high on its agenda in 2013, laying special emphasis on the settlement of the conflict in Transnistria, where Ukraine also acts in a national capacity as guarantor and mediator. We tried to inject a more constructive spirit into the existing negotiation format. Despite a challenging atmosphere, it was possible to reach compromise solutions on a number of problematic issues within the 5+2 talks on the Transnistrian settlement, five rounds of which took place in 2013. Two meetings of the prime minister of Moldova and the Transnistrian leader, which were held thanks to the Chairmanship’s facilitating efforts, were also conducive to reaching a compromise.

By adopting a Ministerial Statement in Kyiv on the negotiations in the 5+2 format, we sent a strong signal of our joint determination to achieve progress on the whole agenda of the talks with the aim of reaching a comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

Co-chairing the Geneva International Discussions and supporting the efforts of the Minsk Group co-chairs were also among our key tasks over the course of the year. I strongly welcome November's meeting of the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the first since January 2012. It serves as a warranty for peace, stability, and the opening of new opportunities for regional co-operation.

With regard to Nagorno-Karabakh, the ministers endorsed through their statement the new dynamics in the bilateral dialogue at the highest level between Azerbaijan and Armenia. We hope that this joint support will contribute to reinvigorating the negotiation process between these two states.

Our deliberations on combating human trafficking resulted in the endorsement of the Addendum to the 2003 OSCE Action Plan. The document will contribute to fostering global action aimed at eradicating this heinous crime.

We were able to adopt important decisions within the politico-military dimension, enhancing our acquis in the areas of non-proliferation and transnational threats.

We also agreed to strengthen the OSCE's mandate in the area of energy and the environment. The particular focus on promoting energy efficiency and the use of renewable sources of energy proves that the OSCE keeps up with the times.

I am particularly pleased to note that, after a lengthy gap, we have succeeded in adopting new decisions in the human dimension – notably on the freedom of religion or belief, and on Roma and Sinti. This gives a clear message that the OSCE remains relevant and instrumental across all dimensions of security.

I would also like to mention the extension of the mandate of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, which was achieved on schedule, as well as the appointment of a new High Commissioner on National Minorities, ensuring the seamless functioning of these two important institutions.

Looking back on 2013, I note with great satisfaction the renewed co-operation between ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in the area of election observation. With a number of presidential and parliamentary elections in the OSCE area last year it was important that the OSCE family presented a unified front in this sphere.

All this is to underpin the premise that the OSCE platform remains useful and attractive for security dialogue. Certain adjustments are needed, however. Strengthening the unity of purpose and the "culture of engagement" within the OSCE is essential for an effective response to evolving threats and challenges in our region. The deficit of trust and confidence is openly ac-

knowledge as a key challenge faced by the Organization and an obstacle in identifying common responses to current security threats and challenges.

In this vein, I would like to encourage all participating States to focus more on the future when deliberating various issues on the Organization's agenda. This will enable us to unite around common goals. The future offers us a clean slate, and we are responsible for what we write there. Do we possess the necessary will to focus on a co-operative agenda, uniting us in the face of common threats and challenges?

My retrospective would not be complete without words of gratitude to all my colleagues from Ukraine's OSCE team as well as from the OSCE family for their dedicated assistance and advice. My appreciation also goes to all participating States for their continuous support and constructive co-operation over the year.

Ukrainian Chairmanship's year comes to an end, but Ukraine will continue its active engagement with the OSCE as a Troika member in 2014. With the highly successful and fruitful Kyiv OSCE Ministerial Council just over, it gives me hope that in the coming years participating States will preserve the same co-operative spirit, giving the Organization a new impetus in the run-up to its 40th anniversary in 2015.