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## The Helsinki +40 Process: A Chance to Assess the Relevance of the OSCE's Comprehensive Security Model in the 21st Century

In today's increasingly complex and multipolar security environment, the main challenge facing the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is to prove its core mission. Although the OSCE area is not immune to the increasing rivalry and escalating competition that presently characterizes the international system, there are persuasive reasons to conclude that OSCE participating States generally acknowledge the need to preserve the OSCE's key functions as a broad and inclusive framework for maintaining stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area. Nevertheless, against a backdrop of increasing fragmentation and deterioration of relations in the OSCE area in recent years, there is growing concern about the capacity of the OSCE to continue providing added value by responding to the traditional security agenda as well as by adapting its tools and mechanisms to cope with new challenges. A growing number of governments question the OSCE's ability to produce deliverables, serve as a forum for bridging differences through dialogue, and ensure respect for commitments and broad co-operation on issues that are pertinent to their security interests. At the same time, a new East-West political divide seems to be developing, and new kinds of threats to security are emerging and reshaping the preferences, interests, and values of participating States. Although it is obvious that in today's dynamic and unpredictable security environment preserving and strengthening the unique co-operative and comprehensive security approach exemplified by the OSCE should be the key objective, increasing competition could push participating States to pursue policies that could further marginalize the OSCE, delegitimize its principles and values and reduce its operational effectiveness.

The growing assertiveness and disengagement of some participating States also affects the OSCE's function as a forum for dialogue and consultation. The Organization's main decision-making and consultative bodies are increasingly used for delivering political statements and unilateral messages instead of for meaningful dialogue aimed at reaching consensus. Reduced opportunities to seek and achieve compromise inevitably result in frustration and fading interest in participation in the consultative and decision-making process. Ultimately, participating States are facing the dilemma of whether to continue investing in the OSCE, both politically and in terms of resources.

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Note: The views presented in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Organization.

The OSCE can only be as relevant and efficient as its participating States allow it to be. Over the years, the Organization has developed unhealthy routines and cumbersome working patterns that reflect unilateral thinking and the prevalence of narrow national interests over the principles of multilateralism and co-operation. Some participating States are disengaging from the co-operative security agenda and seeking alternative options through bilateral and less inclusive international arrangements. This trend makes prospects for reaching consensus within OSCE decision-making structures more challenging. Not only is it becoming harder and harder to reach consensus on complicated issues, but routine operational and administrative matters are also increasingly being held hostage to the political stalemate. Today the OSCE is a vivid example of the increasingly complicated state of relations in its area, as demonstrated by the growing differences of opinion on its role in the emerging security system. Maintaining the status quo and preventing progress on “unfinished business” between East and West is in nobody’s interest. Addressing contemporary security threats that mainly originate outside the OSCE area calls for greater unity and co-operation. Yet more than twenty years after signing the Charter of Paris for a New Europe,<sup>1</sup> the participating States have still not overcome Cold War logic in addressing their national security concerns and respecting the interests of others.

What is at stake is the effectiveness of the OSCE’s values-based, co-operative, and comprehensive policy approach. The role of the OSCE in today’s rapidly changing security and political environment is increasingly questioned. The good news is that participating States are aware of these disturbing trends and continue to seek opportunities for open discussions on how to strengthen the security dialogue and co-operation model the OSCE represents.

In this context, the Helsinki +40 Process can be understood as a new effort to advance the OSCE’s reform agenda. In a way it is a continuation of discussions aimed at changing the dynamics in the Organization that started with the 2009 Corfu Process, which led to the 2010 OSCE Astana Summit, which in turn was followed by the V-to-V Dialogues (Vancouver to Vladivostok via Vienna and Vilnius) fostered by the 2011 OSCE Lithuanian Chairmanship and the “building-blocks” deliberations carried out under the 2012 OSCE Irish Chairmanship. The 2015 commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act offers an opportunity to take stock, define priorities, and generate momentum for future work towards a vision of a security community. In broader terms, the Helsinki +40 Process can be considered as an opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of the Organization’s basic values and principles in the 21st century.

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1 Charter of Paris for a New Europe, Paris, 21 November 1990, in: Arie Bloed (ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Analysis and Basic Documents, 1972-1993*, Dordrecht 1993, pp. 537-566, also available at: <http://www.osce.org/node/39516>.

Given the continued deterioration of security and co-operation since the Astana Summit, there is obvious value in pursuing strategic discussions on how the OSCE's comprehensive and cross-dimensional security model can be strengthened to cope with the increasingly complex political and security challenges of the 21st century. Launched at the 2012 OSCE Ministerial Council in Dublin, the Helsinki +40 Process has been formally defined as "an inclusive effort by all participating States to provide strong and continuous political impetus to advancing work towards a security community, and further strengthening our co-operation in the OSCE on the way towards 2015, a year that marks four decades since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act".<sup>2</sup> Mindful of the lessons of similar efforts in the past, the Helsinki +40 Process provides continuity through a multiyear perspective, and serves as a platform for open-ended dialogue to explore possibilities for addressing contentious issues in an informal, yet systematic and structured manner.

The Helsinki +40 Process is based on the unprecedented commitment of successive OSCE Chairmanships to pursue a shared agenda and work towards a security community without imposing artificial deadlines. Thanks to its long-term perspective, broadly defined agenda, and flexible working methods, the Helsinki +40 framework has all the ingredients to stimulate discussions in the best tradition of the early Helsinki Process. Since it allows participating States to focus on a longer horizon, potential compromises need not be seen as concessions, but as steps toward achieving win-win results in the long term.

#### *The Astana Summit: Reconfirmed Commitments – Lost Momentum*

The breakdown of trust over the Georgian crisis in August 2008 and the recognition of the need to address "unfinished business" 20 years after the end of the Cold War were the main impulses prompting the OSCE participating States to consider conducting a broad, cross-dimensional dialogue on all aspects of European security. Acknowledging that the Helsinki ideals remained far from accomplished and that the OSCE needed to be put back on track, their governments agreed to discuss how to reinvigorate the OSCE, which was already facing constraints before the war in Georgia, and adjust it to the new realities.

In June 2009, the Greek OSCE Chairmanship hosted an informal meeting of OSCE foreign ministers in Corfu, launching the so-called Corfu Process. Its underlying purpose was to assess the situation in each of the three security dimensions and develop a common understanding of how to adapt the OSCE so that it could effectively address emerging security threats. In the subsequent months, the Corfu Process involved regular, informal dialogue

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<sup>2</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Ministerial Council, Dublin 2012, *Decision on the OSCE Helsinki+40 Process*, at: <http://www.osce.org/mc/97974>.

among ambassadors in Vienna supported by visitors from the capitals. Thanks to its informal and open-ended nature, these meetings created a forum where important questions of security were discussed in a frank and honest manner. In addition to improving the climate for dialogue, the Corfu Process helped to identify challenges that the OSCE needed to address in order to achieve progress and overcome differences. These challenges included implementation of OSCE commitments; the resolution of protracted conflicts; the role of the OSCE in the conflict cycle; arms control and confidence- and security-building regimes as means of building trust in the evolving security environment; transnational and multidimensional threats and challenges; economic and environmental challenges; human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as democracy and the rule of law; and enhancing the OSCE's effectiveness and interaction with other organizations and institutions.

The Corfu Process gradually established a foundation for securing political endorsement of the proposal for an OSCE summit, vigorously supported by the 2010 OSCE Kazakhstan Chairmanship. The 2010 Astana Summit, although considered controversial by many, was a momentous event in the evolution of the OSCE. Many Western participating States were unenthusiastic about the prospect of a summit. Concerned that it would be premature and lack substance, they eventually gave their consent to what has been nicknamed the "launching summit", since, rather than delivering immediate outcomes, it would provide the political impetus and initial framework for a process that could lead to overcoming existing divides. Subsequent developments have shown that these doubts about the summit were partly justified.

Despite tremendous political and diplomatic efforts, the Astana Summit did not set into a motion a process leading to negotiations aimed at defining the OSCE's role in the 21st century. In hindsight it is apparent that the participating States were not ready to move beyond the level of political rhetoric used in Astana. Failure to reach consensus on the *Framework for Action* was not a coincidence but rather a logical consequence of the prevailing absence of trust and confidence that has only continued to deepen. Although participating States demonstrated their commitment to the OSCE and the norms and values it represents, they failed to provide clear guidance on how to capitalize on the positive momentum generated by the Corfu Process and translate numerous initiatives and proposals into tangible deliverables. In reality, participating States were not prepared to address fundamental flaws in their relationships and launch serious consultations to overcome mistrust and suspicion.

Still, the very fact that the Heads of State or Government recommitted themselves to the "vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and com-

mon goals”<sup>3</sup> created new political momentum and an opportunity to revive the enthusiasm for a Europe “whole and free”<sup>4</sup> that characterized the security dialogue and co-operation in the years immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall. They also tasked the incoming Chairmanship-in-Office “with organizing a follow-up process within existing formats, taking into consideration ideas and proposals put forward by the participating States, including in the framework of the Corfu Process and in the preparation of the Astana Summit, and [...] developing a concrete action plan based on the work done by the Kazakhstan Chairmanship”.<sup>5</sup> The pragmatic approach prevailed, and the focus slowly shifted towards exploring how the OSCE can develop its potential to promote a true security community as envisioned in Astana. However, enthusiasm and expectations were much lower. As the hoped-for progress failed to materialize in Astana, expectations became more measured, and the participating States grew more cautious and less enthusiastic. Indeed, soon afterwards the OSCE once again found itself at a crossroads, and the summit’s disappointing outcome contributed to the downturn in East-West relations.

It is now evident that improving this state of affairs might take a very long time, while the OSCE has become both a hostage and a contributor to the continued lack of progress in the strategic dialogue on Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security and co-operation. Any honest appraisal of the OSCE in its current stage of development must recognize that despite the declining intensity and quality of East-West dialogue and co-operation, the Organization has achieved some progress since the Astana Summit, starting with a number of forward-looking decisions at the 2011 OSCE Ministerial Council in Vilnius. These include a landmark decision on the conflict cycle – which is broadly recognized as the OSCE’s core business – to enhance the OSCE’s capabilities in early warning, early action, dialogue facilitation and mediation support, and post-conflict rehabilitation.<sup>6</sup> The participating States also achieved slight but important headway by adopting an updated version of the 1999 Vienna Document on confidence- and security-building measures, the Vienna Document 2011. They also signaled the OSCE’s capacity to respond to current needs and expectations of participating States by adopting a decision strengthening the co-ordination and coherence of the Organization’s efforts to

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3 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Summit Meeting, Astana 2010, *Astana Commemorative Declaration: Towards a Security Community*, SUM.DOC/1/10/Corr.1, 3 December 2010, para. 1, at: <http://www.osce.org/cio/74985>.

4 *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*, cited above (Note 1), p. 541.

5 Astana Commemorative Declaration: Towards a Security Community, cited above (Note 3).

6 Decision No. 3/11, Elements of the Conflict Cycle, Related to Enhancing the OSCE’s Capabilities in Early Warning, Early Action, Dialogue Facilitation and Mediation Support, and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation, MC.DEC/3/11 of 7 December 2011, in: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Eighteenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, 6 and 7 December 2011*, Vilnius, 7 December 2011, pp.11-16, at: <http://www.osce.org/mc/88839>. Cf. Claus Neukirch, Early Warning and Early Action – Current Developments in OSCE Conflict Prevention Activities, in this volume, pp. 123-133.

address transnational threats. The OSCE reacted relatively swiftly to developments in the Arab world by resolving to offer support to the democratic transition processes in the southern Mediterranean and to seek ways to enhance co-operation and dialogue with the Partners for Co-operation. In a similar vein, the participating States agreed that the OSCE should contribute to international efforts to support transition processes in Afghanistan and its co-operation with its Central Asian neighbours.

Although the Lithuanian Chairmanship's approach of taking small but tangible steps was not intended to generate consensus at the strategic level, it stimulated informal discussions on how to advance the Astana vision. This debate eventually led to the idea of using the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in 2015 as an opportunity to take stock of progress achieved towards a security community. The 2012 Irish OSCE Chairmanship enthusiastically promoted this idea, and the Dublin Ministerial Council Decision on the 2014 and 2015 OSCE Chairmanships (Switzerland and Serbia, respectively) transformed the basic concept into the Helsinki +40 Process, with the support of all participating States. It also managed to successfully conclude the process of Mongolia's accession as a fully fledged OSCE participating State.<sup>7</sup>

### *Strategic Dissonance: A Self-Perpetuating Cycle of Shrinking Trust and Confidence*

The Corfu Process, the Astana Summit, and the building-blocks efforts were important steps in restoring trust and confidence among key OSCE players after the 2008 Russia-Georgia war. They built on new momentum created by the Obama administration's "reset" policy towards Russia, as well as growing interest among European Union members to strengthen the strategic partnership with Russia and other countries in the post-Soviet space. They also drew on progressive elements in the Russian foreign policy discourse under President Dmitry Medvedev, such as the decrease in Russian lobbying for a European Security Treaty within the Corfu Process. In the years since Astana, however, the political landscape has continued to evolve, which naturally affects the OSCE.

Although interstate co-operation and dependence have reached unprecedented levels, and Europe no longer fears a large-scale military confrontation, the logics of mutual assured destruction and zero-sum-game thinking continue to play out in the OSCE framework. It is widely recognized that the lack of trust and confidence among participating States fuelled by historical animosities and current uncertainties is a key obstacle to finding

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7 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Ministerial Council, *Decision No. 2/12, Accession of Mongolia to the OSCE*, MC.DEC/2/12, 21 November 2012, at: <http://www.osce.org/mc/97736>.

common responses to contemporary security challenges. Divergent views on how to address these challenges and protracted conflicts continue to contaminate the OSCE agenda. As a result, the key questions that define the dynamics of security dialogue and co-operation within the OSCE area remain unaddressed.

Even though the most crucial security issues, such as global missile defence and the Iranian nuclear dossier, are outside the purview of the OSCE, they influence strategic thinking on the shape of the future security community in general, and the OSCE in particular. Here it needs to be stressed once again that the OSCE's role is largely determined by the interests of the participating States. The Organization's relevance depends on the desire (or lack thereof) of participating States to use its tools and mechanisms to address both the "old" and "new" security agenda. Although the CSCE/OSCE has reinvented itself several times since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, achieving progress has always depended on the relationship between the interests of various states or groups of states and their readiness to seek compromise. Today there is a declining sense of ownership among key participating States. They do not see the OSCE as serving their interests adequately, so they do not use it to pursue them, or they take an à la carte approach and only focus on selected aspects of the Organization's activity. This only serves to undermine the OSCE's comprehensive and inclusive character.

Although the vision of a free, democratic, common, and indivisible security community is still universally appealing, progress continues to be hampered by divergent strategic perspectives and a reluctance to address contentious issues in a direct dialogue. As a result, the participating States are increasingly unable to be self-critical and more prone to point fingers at others, over-emphasizing differences rather than focusing on what unites them. Broadly speaking, Western countries want to strengthen the OSCE as a community of values entrenched in the shared commitments and principles, with special focus on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law. Meanwhile, Russia and other CIS countries continue to be rooted in a bloc-based approach, emphasizing indivisible and equal security underpinned by a legally binding security treaty. The inability to overcome old patterns of thinking leads to deadlocks and fosters mistrust and suspicion. This vicious circle makes it difficult for governments to engage in meaningful and results-oriented dialogue and to prepare themselves and the OSCE to address 21st-century threats and challenges effectively. Many see unilateral re-positioning in the emerging security architecture as more strategically relevant than addressing the crisis of the OSCE model of co-operative security.

Some observers argue that the unwillingness to seek compromise and advance security dialogue is the continuing application of Cold War positions to the new realities. Others point to the absence of leaders with vision and a lack of creative thinking. Without making any ideological judgments, one can

argue that tectonic changes in the current security environment and the lack of effective responses to them are pushing governments to emphasize national narratives and short-term priorities at the expense of long-term strategic initiatives. As a result, they tend to focus on differences, on divergent threat and security perceptions instead of seeking effective ways to address them by developing a common, forward-looking agenda. Apparently, the magnitude and multidimensionality of current challenges are helping to create an environment of uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability in which governments feel insecure and prefer more protective, inward-looking options instead of multilateral but often volatile solutions.

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that a growing number of leaders, who have both political and personal interests at stake, prefer to pursue their international agenda through unilateral means and/or focus on deepening defence and integration arrangements such as NATO and the EU, on the one hand, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Eurasian Economic Community and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), on the other, rather than on the co-operative security mechanisms of the OSCE. In this context, embarking on the uncertain and unpredictable project of creating a security community seems today like a distant, non-priority option.

As a result, politico-military co-operation in the OSCE context is stagnating; the profile of the economic and environmental dimension remains weak and lacks strategic direction; and, in the human dimension, the key democratic norms, human rights, and fundamental freedoms continue to be ignored and challenged by a number of participating States. Furthermore, reaching consensus on much-needed new commitments in this area (ensuring fundamental rights and freedoms on the internet and strengthening the protection of journalists, to name but two) has become a difficult task for consecutive Chairmanships.

In short, at a time when the OSCE's legitimacy as a community of values is increasingly questioned, and its model of comprehensive and co-operative security is at stake, the Helsinki +40 Process could become a forum for addressing many of the critical issues facing the OSCE and rethinking its role in the contemporary security context. However, in stark contrast to previous efforts of this kind, this time there is much less enthusiasm and clarity regarding the expected results.

#### *The Helsinki +40 Process – A Chance to Recreate the Spirit of Helsinki*

Ministerial Council Decision 3/12 on the Helsinki +40 Process called on the forthcoming OSCE Chairmanships of Ukraine, Switzerland, and Serbia to take a co-ordinated, strategic approach with the continuity afforded by a multi-year perspective to work towards creating a security community. This



process was to be facilitated by an open-ended Informal Helsinki +40 Working Group at the level of permanent representatives in Vienna. The then current and incoming members of the Troika and forthcoming Chairmanships (Lithuania, Ireland, Ukraine, Switzerland and Serbia) were asked to propose an agenda for the Informal Working Group, and the forthcoming Chairmanships were tasked with reporting to the participating States twice a year on the progress of the Helsinki +40 Process. The OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) was also invited to contribute to the process. The participating States were urged to demonstrate commitment to the result-oriented process leading up to 2015.

One of the key lessons of the Corfu Process was the importance of focusing on long-term objectives while working towards short-term deliverables. Thus the main purpose of the Helsinki +40 Process should be to encourage participating States to engage in results-oriented discussion, which will enhance the OSCE's positive agenda and be conducive to achieving consensus on strategic issues.

Enhanced trust and confidence among the participating States are both an expected result and the indicator of success of the Helsinki +40 Process. The process will only succeed if the participating States, and particularly the key players, demonstrate commitment to engage in an open and constructive dialogue on all issues that have already been on the OSCE agenda for some time, including the most divisive ones in the politico-military and human dimensions. They must also demonstrate the political will to reach consensus on concrete deliverables in the run-up to 2015. The early days of the Helsinki dialogue, when governments were able to reach consensus despite ideological and other differences, could serve as an inspiration. The key principles of the Helsinki +40 Process should be engagement and the recognition of mutual interdependence and the need to address challenges together. Nevertheless, the process is not a panacea for the OSCE's problems. Many of the most contentious issues will most probably remain on the agenda after 2015.

Although the prospects for creating a new basic consensus on the substantive issues are not yet visible, there is a growing recognition of the risk that the absence of a productive dialogue could result in a breakdown of security and stability structures in the OSCE region. By creating the Informal Helsinki +40 Working Group, the participating States showed that they are not ignorant of the current state of affairs and that they want to find ways to overcome the existing impasse. The good news is that despite growing distrust towards, and disengagement from, international institutions in general, and the OSCE in particular, governments continue to share an understanding of the need to preserve the Organization's role as an inclusive forum for dialogue and its comprehensive approach to security. They still see the added value of the OSCE as a platform for identifying and understanding differences and for seeking ways to foster mutual trust and define common goals.

The Helsinki +40 Process provides an opportunity to help create a new consensus between East and West and redefine the role of the OSCE so that it reflects the interests of all participating States. It also gives governments a chance to address contentious issues not only in the politico-military and human dimensions, but also to build upon the converging understanding that transnational threats and challenges originating outside the OSCE area must be tackled together.

*The Informal Helsinki +40 Working Group: From General to Specific*

At the OSCE Permanent Council Meeting on 17 January 2013, the new Chairperson-in-Office, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Leonid Kozhara, confirmed Ukraine's commitment to drive the Helsinki +40 Process forward and announced the establishment of the Informal Helsinki +40 Working Group. At the Working Group's first meeting on 12 February 2013 in Vienna, the ambassadors demonstrated their readiness to engage and look afresh at all open questions and proposals. The possible adoption of a landmark document at the end of 2015 was identified as a key point of reference for the discussions. To increase the chances of adopting such a document, they agreed to take the "building-blocks" approach with the aim of translating consolidated areas of agreement into concrete deliverables under each of the 2013-2015 Chairmanships, thus enabling incremental progress in a multi-year timeframe. There was broad support for the Chairmanship's view that the discussions should reflect the comprehensive security mandate of the OSCE and should focus on issues that have already been on the Organization's agenda for some years, including:

- fostering military transparency by revitalizing and modernizing conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building regimes;
- further enhancing OSCE capacities to address transnational threats;
- further strengthening OSCE capacities across the conflict cycle;
- enhancing the strategic orientation of the economic and environmental dimension;
- strengthening the implementation of all existing OSCE commitments, including in the human dimension; and
- enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the OSCE.

Many ambassadors pointed to the protracted conflicts as serious threats to security in the OSCE region, and recommended that the Helsinki +40 Process should also seek to improve the OSCE's ability to contribute to their resolution. The Chairmanship's suggestion to focus on a strategic "orientation" debate in the initial stage of the process enjoyed broad support. There was also broad agreement that the relevant decision-making bodies should take up

the ideas and proposals put forward within the Informal Working Group and translate them into concrete decisions.

At subsequent meetings of the Informal Working Group, many participants advocated using the Helsinki +40 Process to recreate a culture of engagement within the OSCE. They shared the view that the discussion should not be about fundamentally changing the nature and working methods of the OSCE, but rather about its “optimization” – i.e. building on its strengths, expertise, and capabilities. The process should not allow participants to impose their perspective or lecture others, but instead should focus on building consensus on key issues to help restore trust and confidence.

There was general agreement on the need to examine the Organization’s capacity to respond to new threats to security while continuing to address existing challenges. Some Western countries expressed concern about the growing gap in the interpretation of OSCE values and the inadequate implementation of commitments by some participating States. Russia and other CIS states, meanwhile, stressed the need to seek new purpose for the OSCE and identify areas for common action and shared interests, mainly in tackling transnational threats. There was a prevailing view that in recent years the participating States have been less inclined to endorse the co-operative approach to security, overemphasizing their differences rather than focusing on a unifying agenda. It was agreed that confidence could be rebuilt incrementally through concrete steps, such as achieving agreement on issues related to the daily operations of the Organization and on deliverables within reach.

Following the “orientation phase”, the Informal Working Group initiated thematic debates. The first such debate focused on developing a strategic approach to the economic and environmental dimension. Subsequently, the Ukrainian Chairmanship convened a discussion on issues pertaining to the effectiveness and efficiency of the OSCE, including strengthening the legal personality of the Organization and activities on the ground, as well as improving working methods and practices. The following meetings of the Working Group looked at ways to foster military security with regard to conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures and also discussed how to strengthen implementation of the OSCE commitments, particularly in the human dimension.

### *The Way Forward*

In December 2013, the chairmanships of Ukraine, Switzerland, and Serbia jointly presented the roadmap on the Helsinki +40 Process, outlining the main thematic areas, objectives, and potential results of further discussion.<sup>8</sup>

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8 Cf. *Helsinki +40 Process: A Roadmap towards 2015*, MC.DEL/8/13, 5 December 2013 at: <https://www.osce.org/mc/109302>.

In addition to those detailed above, two further thematic clusters were added at this stage:

- striving for tangible progress towards settlement of the protracted conflicts in a peaceful and negotiated manner;
- increasing interaction with the Partners for Co-operation and with international and regional organizations working in similar fields.

The three Chairmanships have also indicated their intention to appoint Special Co-ordinators for each thematic cluster from among the Vienna ambassadors. Their role will be to move forward discussions in the respective thematic areas by taking stock of previous initiatives and proposals, as well as by pursuing informal consultations and collecting input from participating States, OSCE structures, academic institutions, and think-tanks. They will be asked to prepare concept papers and draft decisions for the Chairmanship, to be further discussed in the Working Group meetings. If the discussions indicate good prospects for translating proposed ideas into concrete decisions, the Chairmanship could decide to forward them to the appropriate decision-making body for consideration with a view towards producing tangible results in various areas in the run up to 2015. The current and incoming Chairmanships are conscious of the need to keep the agenda of the Working Group broad, inclusive, and forward-looking. At the same time, they see the opportunity to break down discussions into areas where there are better prospects for engaging participating States in “trade-off” negotiations and recreating the OSCE’s original role as a platform for East-West rapprochement.

The first year of the Helsinki +40 Process demonstrated that while there is a general will to engage in dialogue, it is still a long way from developing systematic efforts to bridge differences and discuss possible “package deals”. Given the broad support for leading the debate towards a landmark document to be presented for negotiation and adoption in 2015, the current and incoming Chairmanships agree that the above-mentioned thematic clusters should represent the Informal Working Group’s main areas of work. Their ambitious agenda was given a powerful political boost at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Kyiv in December 2013, where a Declaration on Furthering the Helsinki +40 Process was adopted.<sup>9</sup> Many see this as the key political document passed at the Ministerial Council. In it, the participating States reconfirm their strong commitment to further develop the Helsinki +40 Process and call on the forthcoming Chairmanships of Switzerland and Serbia to stimulate result-oriented dialogue in order to advance the process through concrete follow-up discussions. At this early stage, it is difficult to envision what concrete deliverables (i.e. resolutions by OSCE decision-making bodies) can be

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Ministerial Council, Kyiv 2013, *Declaration on Furthering the Helsinki +40 Process*, MC.DOC/1/13, 6 December 2013, at: [www.osce.org/mc/109345](http://www.osce.org/mc/109345).

achieved. In some cases, establishing dialogue will itself be a deliverable. However, there is a shared view that this incremental approach could support the strategic goal of working towards a security community and that it increases the likelihood of adopting a landmark document in 2015. However, it remains to be seen whether this tactic will pay off.

Lessons learned from past efforts show that there is a need to seek more intensive involvement by civil society and academia in these debates. Soon after assuming the post of OSCE Secretary General, Lamberto Zannier recognized the need to strengthen interaction between the OSCE and Track II initiatives, thus linking the contributions of traditional multilateral structures and civil society to efforts to build a security community. In 2012, he launched an informal platform for dialogue called Security Days, which brings together prominent experts, civil society representatives, and government officials from across the OSCE region and beyond to engage in free-flowing discussions on aspects of the contemporary security agenda. These include, for example, the role of the OSCE in the 21st century, challenges stemming from security developments outside the OSCE area, the OSCE's role in addressing transnational threats, the future of conventional arms control, post-conflict reconciliation, Afghanistan after 2014, and many other relevant topics. The Security Days format has quickly developed into a well-respected hub for exchanging views on the way forward. It also enables contributions from academia and civil society to be channeled into the Helsinki +40 Process. Moreover, Secretary General Zannier's idea of creating an OSCE network of academic institutions has also been realized.<sup>10</sup>

Given the persistent schism between West and East, at least within the OSCE context, addressing both traditional and new security challenges requires patience and perseverance. The Helsinki +40 Process has been designed to provide a long-term horizon. Not only that, but it also offers a platform for achieving deliverables on the way towards the strategic vision. Working towards a security community is more like a marathon than a sprint. The participating States will achieve progress only if they make an effort to understand each other's perceptions of security threats and try to find potential areas of convergence. As has been shown by previous efforts, a security community cannot be created artificially from the top. Instead, it is a long-term, progressive process involving not only governments and political institutions, but all sectors of society. There is no need to panic or make decisions under pressure. However, the window of opportunity for reaching a new fundamental agreement on the role of the OSCE and the principles on which it is founded might not remain open for very long. The success of the Helsinki +40 Process will greatly depend on whether it can revive the Helsinki spirit and achieve progress in areas where the participating States agree despite having differences on other issues. In the best case, the Helsinki +40

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10 For further information on this, see: Wolfgang Zellner, *The OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions: Baby Steps*, in this volume, pp. 269-275.

Process will create an atmosphere in which trade-offs will again be possible. However, these should not dilute existing commitments, particularly in the human dimension, but instead seek ways to strengthen all three security dimensions and further enhance the OSCE's role in handling global transnational threats.

In the broader context, it is evident that fundamental progress in East-West relations is not on the immediate horizon. In all frankness, it cannot be achieved until political elites in Russia and other CIS states share common values with their Western counterparts and see their interests aligned with the United States and European Union rather than against them. Today it seems very likely that the transformation process in these countries will continue to experience difficult moments and may further slow down. Although the linking of security and democracy initiatives, as promoted by the OSCE, has become unpopular in some countries, there is no need to actively seek alternatives to the Organization. On the contrary, at a time when a growing number of external and internal factors are challenging the added value of multilateral arrangements in general, and the OSCE model of comprehensive security in particular, preserving and revamping the OSCE clearly has more value than allowing its collapse and the uncertainty that this would create.

Yet expectations of the Helsinki +40 Process need to be realistic. The process is only a phase in the Organization's long-term efforts to cope with the traditional security agenda while also re-conceptualizing its profile in the new era. It is worth noting that, already at the 2004 OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Sofia, the participating States established a Panel of Eminent Persons tasked with "provid[ing] strategic vision for the Organization in the 21st century".<sup>11</sup> Despite progress in many areas, this is still a fundamental challenge on the OSCE agenda. Failure to address it will only deepen the Organization's ongoing marginalization and delegitimize the norms and commitments it both represents and is based on, including in the fields of common and co-operative security, democracy, and human rights.

Governments have no reasonable alternative to seeking opportunities for enhanced dialogue and achieving progress where it is within reach. The Helsinki + 40 Process can help them to balance their national interests within the framework of a common agenda. Looking at the current dynamics within the OSCE, it is likely that the Helsinki +40 Process will offer one of the few opportunities to achieve progress in the years to come and put the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security dialogue and co-operation back on the right track.

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11 Decision No. 16/04, Establishment of a Panel of Eminent Persons on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE, MC.DEC/16/04, 7 December 2004, in: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Twelfth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, 6 and 7 December 2004*, MC.DOC/1/04, Sofia, 7 December 2004.