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The 2014 Swiss OSCE Chairmanship: Between "Routine" and "Crisis"

Switzerland and the OSCE – A Special Relationship

The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) and its successor organization, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), have a special place in Switzerland's foreign policy. On the one hand, the OSCE is the only European regional security platform in which Switzerland is a full participating State (since it is not a member either of NATO or the EU).

On the other hand, historically, Switzerland played a prominent bridge-building role within the group of neutral and non-aligned states in the CSCE[1] and contributed to building trust between the Cold War blocs.

For these reasons, Switzerland was open to the idea of assuming the OSCE Chairmanship in 2014 for the second time in the Organization's history. Switzerland is the first participating State to have chaired the Organization twice, having already done so in 1996.

The process that led to Switzerland's nomination for the 2014 Chairmanship was the first time that the participating States of the OSCE agreed to consecutive Chairmanships, with Serbia being simultaneously nominated for 2015. Through this arrangement, Switzerland and Serbia aimed to ensure more continuity and predictability at the helm of the Organization. This continuity was institutionalized by the drafting and presentation of a joint workplan, which sets overall priorities for the two Chairmanships.

During the preparations for its Chairmanship, Switzerland defined ten specific priorities under the general leitmotif of "Creating a Security Community for the Benefit of Everyone". The processes and the objectives of these priorities established the framework for what will be referred to in this article as the "routine Chairmanship".

However, the events in and around Ukraine, which had already started to unfold at the end of 2013, also created the conditions of what will be referred to as the "crisis Chairmanship",[2] which focused from the very begin-

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Note: The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the position of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The author writes in her own capacity. Thanks to Jean-Marc Flükiger and the members of the Task Force for their support.

1   This group was composed of Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Liechtenstein, Malta, San Marino, Sweden, and Yugoslavia.

2   The distinction between "routine Chairmanship" and "crisis Chairmanship" is set out in: Janne Taalas/Kari Möttölä, The Spirit of Helsinki 2.0 – The Finnish OSCE Chairmanship 2008, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2009*, Baden-Baden, 2010, pp. 319-332.

ning on the management of this crisis and the attempt to find solutions. By 25 December 2014, the crisis had claimed the lives of 4,771 people (including 298 from flight MH17), wounded 10,360, internally displaced 610,413 people, and provoked the flight of 593,609 people to neighbouring countries.[3]

This article aims to present these two facets of the 2014 Swiss OSCE Chairmanship, the successes, and remaining challenges.

The Crisis Chairmanship: Using the "OSCE Toolbox"

In compliance with Ministerial Council Decision 3/11 on the conflict cycle, which asks the OSCE Chairmanship, the executive structures, and the participating States "to use, swiftly and to the greatest extent possible, all available tools and procedures as applicable to a particular crisis or conflict situation", the response to the crisis in Ukraine made full use of the "OSCE toolbox", involving efforts by the Chairmanship as well as by the Institutions, the Secretariat, and other instruments. The various instruments used during the crisis Chairmanship are presented in the following sections.

The Chairperson-in-Office (CiO), Didier Burkhalter, focused on direct diplomatic action, intervening frequently at presidential and ministerial level to facilitate a diplomatic solution. The fact that the CiO also held the presidency of the Swiss Confederation in 2014 can be a considered a stroke of luck for the OSCE, as it enabled him to establish relationships not only with foreign ministers but also with heads of state. The CiO also nominated several special envoys and representatives to act on behalf of the Chairmanship in various negotiations, such as the Trilateral Contact Group of senior representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and the OSCE.

Moreover, the Chairmanship made large-scale use of media statements. With 69 CiO statements; seven Trilateral Contact Group statements; one Personal Envoy of the CiO statement; one joint statement by the Personal Envoy of the CiO, the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM); and one statement by the Chair of the Permanent Council, as of 31 December 2014, Switzerland maintained high visibility and a strong presence in the context of the crisis throughout the year.

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3   Figures from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Ukraine Situation report No. 22 as of 26 December 2014*, available at: http:// reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sitrep 22 - Ukraine - 26 December_ FINAL.pdf.

Initiatives by the Swiss Chairmanship and the Creation of the Special Monitoring Mission

First Phase of the Crisis: "Euromaidan"

In November 2013, the then Ukrainian president, Viktor Yanukovych, refused to sign an association agreement with the European Union, which triggered a wave of protests, known as the "Euromaidan", in the capital, Kyiv, and other Ukrainian cities.

Switzerland thus started its Chairmanship in a tense context: Kyiv's city hall had been occupied by protesters since 1 December 2013. The protests were marked by the first human rights violations committed by the police and security forces in this context at the time when the OSCE was holding its 20th Ministerial Council, on 5-6 December 2013, in Kyiv.

In mid-January, the Ukrainian parliament passed restrictive anti-protest laws. Following the death of two demonstrators and the discovery of the dead body of a high-profile activist, protesters began storming regional government offices in western Ukraine.

On 24 January, CiO Burkhalter met then Prime Minister Mykola Azarov on the margins of the World Economic Forum in Davos and discussed measures that the OSCE could take to help resolve the crisis. The CiO offered the expertise of the OSCE to facilitate a dialogue between the government and opposition and proposed a range of possible activities over the mid to long term, including election support. A few days later, Prime Minister Azarov resigned and the Ukrainian parliament rescinded the anti-protest laws.

On the margins of the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics in Sochi on 7 February, the CiO discussed the situation in Ukraine with President Yanukovych and confirmed the OSCE's readiness to assist the country in settling the crisis. A few days earlier, the CiO had met acting minister of foreign affairs, Leonid Kozhara, and opposition leaders on the margins of the Munich Security Conference.

In mid-February, the situation seemed to improve: All 234 protesters who had been arrested since December were released, and Kyiv City Hall, which had been occupied since 1 December, along with other public buildings in the regions, were abandoned by the demonstrators. The Swiss Chairmanship, represented by the Swiss Ambassador to Ukraine, acted as a guarantor and impartial witness of the handover ceremony.

But the respite was short-lived: On 18 February, violent clashes erupted again, leaving 18 people dead and hundreds injured. They came to a head two days later, when 88 people were killed in violence involving snipers firing at unprotected protesters. The CiO, in a phone call with acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Kozhara, urged the Ukrainian authorities to do their utmost to defuse the dangerous situation in the country and offered a set of measures in a bid to end the violence and revive political talks. The package of potential

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measures offered by the CiO included the nomination of an impartial international facilitator, possibly working in tandem with a respected Ukrainian figure, and the dispatch of an international expert team to establish facts on violent incidents and human rights violations.

On 21 February, President Yanukovych and the opposition signed a compromise deal that had been brokered by the foreign ministers of Germany, Poland, and France and a Special Envoy of the Russian Federation.

The situation radically changed the following day: President Yanukovych disappeared, while protesters took control of the presidential administration buildings. Parliament then voted to remove President Yanukovych from power and set presidential elections for 25 May. Yulia Tymoshenko, a long-time opponent of President Yanukovych, was released from prison.

Three days later, the CiO, committed to finding a solution to the crisis, addressed the United Nations Security Council and proposed the establishment of an international contact group to ensure the co-ordination and sharing of information with regard to the crisis in and around Ukraine. For the first time, the CiO also referred to the idea of setting up a monitoring mission to Ukraine.[4] In the same speech he announced the appointment of the Swiss Ambassador to Germany, Tim Guldimann, as his Personal Envoy to Ukraine, with the mandate to co-ordinate ongoing and planned OSCE activities.

Second Phase of the Crisis: Annexation of Crimea

On 28 February, unidentified gunmen appeared in combat uniform outside Crimea's main airports. Together with Ambassador Guldimann, the OSCE HCNM, Astrid Thors, visited Crimea at the beginning of March. They had extensive talks with representatives of the Crimean parliament and of the public administration and civil society, including from the community of Crimean Tatars. In a press statement, Guldimann described the situation as "calm, but very tense."

Meanwhile, the CiO pursued his direct diplomatic efforts to set up an international monitoring mission in Ukraine in a phone call with the president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin. Negotiations on a monitoring mission had already started in Vienna but were stalled. In their conversation, the CiO and President Putin focused on an OSCE monitoring mission, with the CiO stressing the importance of an early consensus on its deployment in order to improve the security situation. They also exchanged views on the creation of an international contact group on Ukraine and potential modalities for its establishment. This discussion significantly contributed to unblocking the negotiations in Vienna.

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4   For an account of the establishment of the Special Monitoring Mission, see Thomas Greminger, Wie die OSZE-Beobachtermission in der Ukraine zustande kam [How the OSCE Monitoring Mission in Ukraine Came about], in: *Swiss Peace Supporter*, June 2014, pp.24-25, at: http://www.vtg.admin.ch/internet/vtg/de/tools/webarchiv/archiv_2010/swiss.parsys.38978.downloadList.92820.DownloadFile.tmp/20142swisspeacesupporter.pdf.

On 16 March, the referendum on the status of Crimea was backed by 97 per cent of voters, according to the organizers. The CiO had condemned the referendum beforehand, saying it was in violation of the Ukrainian constitution and therefore had to be considered illegal. On 18 March, the Russian president signed a bill to integrate Crimea into the Russian Federation. The CiO declared this step "a breach of fundamental OSCE commitments and not compatible with international law" adding that such "unilateral actions contradict the Helsinki Final Act".

The annexation was almost universally condemned, and tensions in Vienna rose to an unprecedented level. However, despite this very difficult situation, on 21 March, the Permanent Council was able to adopt a consensus decision on the establishment of a "Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine" (SMM). Its mandate was to include information gathering and reporting on the security situation, the establishment of facts in response to incidents, and the establishment of contacts and the facilitation of dialogue on the ground to reduce tensions and promote normalization of the situation. Within four days of the Permanent Council decision, 32 "first responders" from nine other OSCE field operations and the Secretariat had been deployed to Ukraine. By the end of 2014, 358 monitors had been deployed.[5] The original six-month mandate of the SMM was extended for the first time in July 2014 and currently runs until March 2015.

Third Phase of the Crisis: Destabilization of the Eastern Part of Ukraine
Two weeks after Crimea's annexation by the Russian Federation, demonstrators, in opposition to the authorities in Kyiv, started seizing government buildings in several cities in Ukraine's east, including Donetsk and Luhansk. In light of the continuing escalation, the foreign ministers of Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and the US, and the High Representative of the EU met in Geneva on 17 April and issued what became to be known as the "Geneva Statement", in which the SMM was called to play a key role in assisting the Ukrainian authorities in the implementation of the agreed measures.

The CiO's roadmap on OSCE support for the implementation of the Geneva Statement was presented on 6 May after extensive discussions with various partners, including Ukraine. The roadmap was also on the agenda of a meeting between the CiO and President Putin in Moscow on 7 May. After the exchange with the CiO, President Putin called on illegally armed groups in eastern Ukraine to postpone the "referendum on self-determination" they had announced for 11 May in order to give national dialogue a chance. He also called the Ukrainian presidential elections of 25 May "a step in the right direction".

An important element of the CiO's roadmap was the call for a Ukrainian-led and Ukrainian-owned inclusive dialogue on national unity. To

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5   As of 30 December 2014.

support this dialogue, the CiO announced the appointment of German Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger as his representative to the National Dialogue Roundtables. Three roundtable meetings were organized in the run-up to the early presidential elections held on 25 May. The usefulness of the roundtable meetings as open forums for dialogue was also acknowledged by the Ukrainian authorities. A proposal for constitutional reform presented at one of the meetings served as a basis of a Memorandum of Understanding and Peace later adopted by the Ukrainian parliament.

One of the first measures carried out by newly elected President Petro Poroshenko after his inauguration on 7 June was to set up a group of senior representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and the OSCE, the "Trilateral Contact Group" (TCG), to address the crisis in eastern Ukraine and to find a political settlement to the conflict there. The establishment of the TCG was agreed upon at a meeting of the heads of state of Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and France and the German chancellor in Normandy in early June.

The CiO appointed Swiss Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini as his representative to the TCG. Just a few days later, President Poroshenko presented his Peace Plan for Eastern Ukraine. On 23 June, the TCG met for the first time with representatives of illegally armed groups in Donetsk. On 24 June, the CiO met the newly appointed foreign minister of Ukraine, Pavlo Klimkin, and President Putin on the margins of the OSCE's Annual Security Review Conference in Vienna to discuss the next steps to support the implementation of President Poroshenko's Peace Plan and the work of the TCG.

"Multitasking SMM": Hostages and the MH17 Crash

In addition to its original responsibilities, the SMM had to face unforeseen tasks and challenges when illegally armed groups started to abduct international observers on the ground. The SMM had had a foretaste of this at the beginning of May with the abduction of unarmed military experts who had been sent to eastern Ukraine to carry out inspections under the Vienna Document. Through the facilitation of the SMM and the involvement of the participating States concerned it was possible to free the military observers only a week after their illegal detention. At the end of May, the nerves and negotiation skills of the SMM were once again put to the test when the illegally armed groups targeted the SMM itself by abducting two groups of four monitors deployed in Donetsk and Luhansk. After tireless efforts, the CiO was able to announce at the end of June their safe, unconditional, and unharmed release.

One of the most tragic moments of 2014 was undoubtedly the crash, on 17 July, of a Malaysian Airlines plane (flight MH17) over rebel-held territory, killing 298 people. The SMM and the TCG were deeply involved in negotiating the modalities of access to the crash site with representatives of illegally armed groups. Experts from the countries of origin of the victims

were sent to the site to investigate the causes, but had to withdraw because of worsening security conditions. A Dutch preliminary report, published in early September, stated that flight MH17 had been hit by "a large number of high energy objects", but did not apportion blame.

Fourth Phase of the Crisis: The Minsk Process
While the OSCE and the Chairmanship are engaged in direct efforts to provide solutions to the crisis in Ukraine, the OSCE has also been involved in implementing the decisions and carrying out the work of other formats. This was to be seen first with the "Geneva format" between the foreign ministers of the Russian Federation, the United States, and Ukraine and the High Representative of the EU.

Another example of the OSCE's implementing role in the context of other initiatives is the "Normandy format" in which the presidents of France, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine and the German chancellor met at the ceremony to mark the 70th anniversary of D-Day in Normandy. This meeting was followed up by a meeting of their foreign ministers in Berlin on 2 July, at which they called for the deployment of OSCE observers to the Russian side of the Ukrainian-Russian international border.

This call was answered by the OSCE when, in a consensus decision on 24 July, all 57 participating States agreed on sending OSCE observers to the border between the Russian Federation and Ukraine at the Russian checkpoints at Gukovo and Donetsk. After the deployment of SMM, and despite a deepening rift among some participating States, this was the second time in less than six months that the 57 OSCE participating States agreed to deploy a field presence.

On 5 September, the TCG met representatives of the Donbas region and agreed on the "Minsk Protocol", which contains twelve points on facilitating implementation of President Poroshenko's Peace Plan and President Putin's initiatives. Among these are a ceasefire, which was put into effect on the same day, decentralization efforts, local elections, the release of detainees, and a political dialogue.

The Minsk Memorandum, which was signed two weeks later, specified the modalities for the implementation of the ceasefire regime, including the establishment of a demilitarized security zone along a jointly defined contact-line.

At the Ministerial Council in Basel, the participating States expressed strong support for the Minsk arrangements. The TCG continued its consultations aimed at reconfirming and strengthening the full implementation of the arrangements, notably the ceasefire, the release of hostages, the delivery of humanitarian aid, securing the border, and the withdrawal of illegal armed formations from Ukrainian territory.

Initiatives by OSCE Institutions and the Secretariat

As outlined at the beginning of this section, the OSCE made use of the whole range of its toolbox. In addition to the diplomatic work of the Chairmanship, the Institutions (RFOM, HCNM, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights/ODIHR) and the Secretariat took initiatives to resolve the crisis. These are presented briefly in the following.[6]

OSCE Institutions
The HCNM, Astrid Thors, and the RFOM, Dunja Mijatović, likewise made a number of visits to Ukraine, including to Crimea from 4 to 6 March 2014, to gather first-hand information and to meet key stakeholders. The RFOM and her office have been following the situation in the country closely, raising the issues of grave violations of media freedom, particularly in relation to attacks on journalists and restrictions to media plurality. Both institutions have made numerous statements to the Permanent Council, stating their concerns and recommendations to remedy issues in the areas of national minorities and media freedom.

Human Rights Assessment Mission
From 18 March to 12 May 2014, ODIHR and the HCNM conducted a human rights assessment mission at the request of the Ukrainian government. A report on the mission's findings and recommendations was released on 12 May 2014.[7]

Election Observation Mission (EOM)
Following an invitation by Ukraine, ODIHR deployed 100 long-term observers and 900 short-term observers to monitor the 25 May 2014 presidential elections in what is considered the "largest election observation mission in the organization's history".[8] The election was assessed positively and declared "largely in line with international commitments and fundamental freedoms".[9] In the autumn, ODIHR deployed yet another mission to observe the snap parliamentary elections held on 26 October. The mission consisted of 80 long-term and 630 short-term observers as well as 75 members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

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6   This list is adapted from the "Food-for-thought Paper on lessons identified from recent OSCE crisis response and implementation of the Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/11", circulated under the reference SEC.GAL/118/14 on 15 July 2014.

7   Cf. *Ukraine, Human Rights Assessment Mission: Report on the Human Rights and Minority Rights Situation, March-April 2014*, at: http://www.osce.org/odihr/118476.

8   Tana de Zulueta, *Monitoring Ukraine's presidential election*, 11 July 2014, updated: 16 September 2014, at: http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/ukraine/121163.

9   Ibid.

National Dialogue Project

From 20 March to 19 April 2014, following a request by the Ukrainian government, the OSCE deployed a team of 15 international experts to Ukraine as part of a "National Dialogue Project" run by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine to identify areas for further OSCE activities to support confidence-building between different parts of Ukrainian society. The project's recommendations for future OSCE engagement to foster social cohesion and dialogue in Ukraine were presented to all participating States at the Permanent Council in Vienna on 30 April 2014.

OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine

The Project Co-ordinator, operating under its 1999 mandate, implemented the National Dialogue Project and developed proposals for continued support for the dialogue process. It also functioned as a crucial initial logistical bridgehead for staff from the OSCE Secretariat, Institutions, and first-responders during the build-up of the SMM. The Project Co-ordinator was essential in overcoming administrative limitations that the SMM faced during the first weeks of its deployment.

Vienna Document

From 5 to 20 March 2014, 30 participating States sent 56 unarmed military and civilian personnel to take part in verification visits to Ukraine under the Vienna Document 2011. Ukraine requested the visits by invoking Chapter III, which allows for the voluntary hosting of visits to dispel concerns about military activities. Since 20 March, several smaller inspection teams of unarmed military experts had been on the ground in Ukraine. In addition, requests for consultation and co-operation as regards unusual military activities have been made under the Vienna Document, which led to three joint Permanent Council/Forum for Security Co-operation meetings.

Reconsolidating European Security as a Common Project

The OSCE's engagement in the Ukraine crisis demonstrated the relevance of the Organization as a forum for dialogue and as an operational responder. At the same time, the crisis in and around Ukraine has shown the importance of addressing the crisis of Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security. For this reason, at the Basel Ministerial Council the CiO launched a high-level "Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project", in close co-operation with the incoming Serbian Chair and the 2016 German Chairmanship.

Chaired by former German diplomat Wolfgang Ischinger, this independent panel is designed to complement and support efforts by the OSCE participating States for an inclusive and constructive security dialogue across

the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions, taking into consideration the recent Ukraine crisis in its broader perspective.

Achievements of the "Crisis Chairmanship"

One of the main achievements of the Chairmanship is the positioning of the OSCE as the main operational responder to the crisis in and around Ukraine. In this regard, it has not only received tasks from the participating States but has also been referred to to implement actions by other international formats such as the Geneva and the Normandy formats.

Moreover, despite this time of crisis and severe tensions, the 57 participating States were able to agree on the creation of the SMM. Through its independent reporting and field contacts, the mission has become one of the most-trusted sources of information on the situation on the ground. In addition and despite the same difficult context, another achievement is the creation of the Border Observation Mission, which monitors and reports on the situation as well as on the movements at the Russian checkpoints of Donetsk and Gukovo on the international Russian-Ukrainian border. Since the adoption of its initial mandate in July 2014, it has already been extended three times, most recently until 23 March 2015.

Another achievement is the contribution made by Swiss Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini in the TCG consisting of senior representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. Ambassador Tagliavini contributed to facilitating the agreement and signature of the Minsk Protocol and Memorandum, which remain the key documents for the de-escalation and stabilization of the situation in certain areas of eastern Ukraine.

While the OSCE played a significant role in the 1990s and helped many countries in their transition period, the Organization has increasingly suffered from a certain loss of relevance and strategic orientation in the last decade. For many observers, as well as for specialists, the crisis in and around Ukraine has been a game changer. In this regard, the OSCE has attracted a lot of international public attention, which has led some commentators to speak about a "renaissance of the OSCE".

The fact that two committed countries, namely Germany and Austria, will take on the Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2016 and 2017, respectively, can be considered another achievement for the Organization. In this regard, the explanation of the German cabinet is worth mentioning, the German authorities declaring that "the role of the OSCE has undergone a re-evaluation since the Ukraine conflict". In the current situation, the Organization "has a really important role to play and a genuinely important function".[10]

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10   See the website of the German Federal Government, *OSCE Chairmanship, More responsibility for Germany*, 1 October, 2014, at: http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/Artikel/2014/10_en/2014-10-01-osze-vorsitz.html.

The "Routine Chairmanship"

The ten priorities defined ahead of 2014 were structured around the following three main thematic clusters: "Fostering security and stability", "Improving people's lives" and "Strengthening the OSCE's capacity to act".

Despite the overall difficult and tense climate among the participating States, the Swiss Chairmanship succeeded in achieving its objectives in several of its priority areas. In addition, the Ministerial Council adopted eight decisions, eight declarations, two commemorative declarations, and one ministerial statement in Basel.
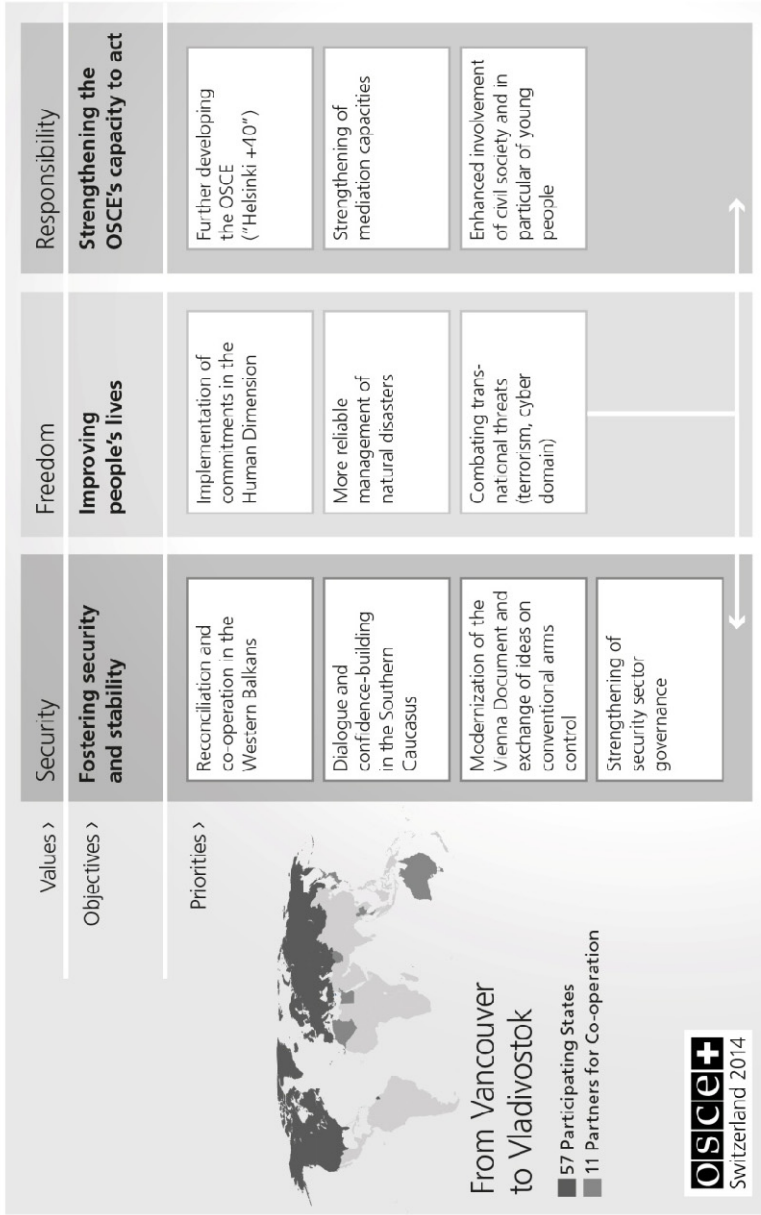
Fostering Security and Stability

The deployment of the OSCE in northern Kosovo was one of the successes of the 2014 Swiss Chairmanship. It was facilitated in consultation with the European Union, Serbia, and Kosovo in support of the implementation of the historic agreement on the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina of April 2013. The Swiss Chairmanship also supported local and parliamentary elections, which were organized for the first time throughout the entire territory of Kosovo, thereby contributing to the integration of four new municipalities into Kosovo's legal structure.

At the broader regional level, the Chairmanship, with the support of its Special Representative for the Western Balkans, Swiss Ambassador Gérard Stoudmann, facilitated the signing of the "Declaration on the role of the State in addressing the issue of persons missing as a consequence of armed conflict and human rights abuses" of the International Commission on Missing Persons by the presidents of Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia and the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 29 August 2014 in Mostar. The signing of this declaration paves the way for further improving relations among states and citizens in the Balkans, including, most importantly, among younger generations. It is hoped that more countries in the region and beyond will sign this declaration.

In the South Caucasus, the Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, Ambassador Angelo Gnädinger, chaired, together with the representatives of the EU and the UN, the Geneva International Discussions. The monthly meetings of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM), which are co-facilitated by the Special Representative and the Head of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia, contributed to stabilizing the situation in this region. In the second half of the year, the Chairmanship witnessed more frequent direct co-operation between the IPRM participants, particularly in relation to detention and law enforcement, and a significant improvement in the working atmosphere. The Chairmanship facilitated numerous people-to-people contacts between artists, students, experts, and officials. Moreover, it was possible to launch a regional "OSCE youth network"

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"Creating a Security Community for the Benefit of Everyone"

Values >	Security	Freedom	Responsibility
Objectives >	**Fostering security and stability**	**Improving people's lives**	**Strengthening the OSCE's capacity to act**
Priorities >	Reconciliation and co-operation in the Western Balkans	Implementation of commitments in the Human Dimension	Further developing the OSCE ("Helsinki +40")
	Dialogue and confidence-building in the Southern Caucasus	More reliable management of natural disasters	Strengthening of mediation capacities
	Modernization of the Vienna Document and exchange of ideas on conventional arms control	Combating trans-national threats (terrorism, cyber domain)	Enhanced involvement of civil society and in particular of young people
	Strengthening of security sector governance		

From Vancouver
to Vladivostok

■ 57 Participating States
■ 11 Partners for Co-operation

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Switzerland 2014

to deepen links between civil society actors. The current Minsk Process dealing with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict mainly consists of a series of ad hoc high-level meetings. The CiO therefore promoted the launch of a more structured and intense negotiation process towards a peace agreement when he visited the region in early June 2014. This idea was welcomed by the Minsk Co-Chairs and discussed by US Secretary of State John Kerry in his meeting with the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in September 2014 in Wales and at the end of October 2014 by the French president, François Hollande, and the two presidents. The Minsk Co-Chairs issued a statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict at the Ministerial Council in Basel.

The priority on strengthening security sector governance (SSG) had two aspects: On the one hand, activities linked with the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security (CoC) and, on the other hand, activities seeking to strengthen the capacities of the Secretariat and the field mission on SSG. During the Swiss Chairmanship, strong emphasis was laid on continuous awareness-raising and progressive improvements to the implementation of the CoC, and, for the first time, outreach activities towards OSCE Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation were planned and conducted. A highlight was the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the CoC. In this regard, a "Commemorative Declaration on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security" recalling the CoC as a unique norm-setting document was adopted by the Ministerial Council 2014 in Basel. A commemorative publication on 20 years of the OSCE CoC was also edited and published by the Swiss Chairmanship and solemnly handed by the CiO to the OSCE Secretary General at the Ministerial Council. Furthermore, the Swiss Chairmanship, together with the Swiss delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, prepared a parliamentary resolution on the Code.

To strengthen the capacities of the Secretariat and the field operations, the Swiss and Serbian Chairmanships tasked the Secretariat with developing internal guidelines on SSG. A network of focal points on SSG within the Secretariat and the field operations was also created. In order to gather support for this topic, a Group of Friends was established. It is led by Slovakia.

No progress could be made, however, on conventional arms control and the modernization of the Vienna Document. The influence of the crisis in and around Ukraine was such that it proved impossible to move forward in this area. Since 2009, participating States have been discussing a possible mandate for future negotiations to modernize the conventional arms control regime in Europe. In this regard, informal discussions took place.

Concerning the Vienna Document, the Swiss Chairmanship was able to maintain the accomplishments of the 2011 document and its content, even if it will be difficult to update it in the near future. The need for a functioning regime of conventional arms control as a cornerstone of European security

will remain. The Helsinki +40 Process and the Panel of Eminent Persons are potential platforms to search for ways to unblock the current stalemate.

Improving People's Lives

In the economic and environmental dimension, enhancing disaster risk reduction has been prominently discussed throughout the "Prague Forum Cycle", i.e. the cycle consisting of the Prague Economic and Environmental Forum and its two preparatory meetings. The Ministerial Council in Basel adopted a decision emphasizing the importance of co-operation among participating States in disaster risk management as a way to diminish tensions within a broader effort to prevent conflict, and where appropriate, build mutual confidence and promote neighbourly relations. During the second preparatory meeting of the 2014 Economic and Environmental Forum, the Swiss Chairmanship organized a field visit for experts and OSCE delegates to Switzerland, which focused on trans-boundary co-operation between the Swiss and Italian authorities in the prevention of natural disasters. In Basel, the Ministers also adopted a decision on the prevention of corruption, recognizing corruption as a potential source of political tension that undermines the stability and security of participating States.

In the human dimension, the Swiss Chairmanship achieved many of its objectives. It facilitated the nomination of Michael Georg Link, a former German minister of state and parliamentarian, as the new director of ODIHR; he began his tenure in July. The Chairmanship restored the topic of torture prevention to the top of the OSCE agenda through civil society regional workshops and Vienna-based discussions with participating States, ODIHR, and other international organizations. For the first time in a decade, the protection of human rights defenders was at the focus of attention at the Chairmanship conference held on 10-11 June 2014 in Bern. The commemorative high-level conference on anti-Semitism in Berlin on 12-13 November 2014 and related conclusions of the Chairmanship paved the way for a ministerial declaration on anti-Semitism at the Ministerial Council. The Swiss Chairmanship also organized the first ever OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference, which led to the adoption of two Ministerial Council decisions and opened the way for holding this conference on a biennial basis in the future. These decisions contribute to preventing and combating violence against women and paved the way for the elaboration of an addendum to the 2004 OSCE action plan for the promotion of the gender equality.

The Swiss Chairmanship also achieved significant successes in placing new topics on the Organization's agenda. The topics of "kidnapping for ransom" and "foreign terrorist fighters" were discussed on several occasions, reflecting the efforts of other forums and organizations on these issues. Both issues were central topics of the OSCE-wide counter-terrorism conference that took place in Interlaken in April. The efforts of the Swiss Chairmanship

were reflected in the two declarations on "foreign terrorist fighters" and "kidnapping for ransom" adopted by the Ministerial Council in Basel.

After the adoption of the first set of confidence-building measures in the field of information and communication technology (known as "cyber CBMs") at the end of the previous year, 2014 was dedicated to their implementation. To that end, the exchange of information is a central element. For this reason, three meetings and an end-of-year conference were convened to exchange information on matters including cyber-strategies, national organizational arrangements, and cyber-capacities.

Strengthening the Organization's Capacity to Act

At the end of 2013, the Ukrainian, Swiss, and Serbian Chairmanships launched a roadmap for Helsinki +40 that identified eight thematic clusters in all dimensions of the OSCE, as well as cross-dimensional topics. The work in the clusters was launched in February and co-ordinators for each cluster were nominated.

The events in Ukraine affected their work from the start. In this regard, one co-ordinator accurately described the impact of the crisis on the work of all co-ordinators: "The crisis in and around Ukraine took most of our time and attention on ways to diffuse the tension and de-escalate the crisis; therefore the Helsinki +40 process was not at the forefront of our deliberations. Nevertheless, the ongoing crisis also has given us the chance to see the relevance of our organization with its ability to make contributions to address the challenges emanating from this crisis."[11]

Owing to the lack of trust between participating States, only modest progress was made in the Helsinki +40 Process. However, the Ministerial Council adopted a declaration on this topic, which gave the Serbian Chairmanship the task of pursuing it in 2015.

Despite tensions, the situation in and around Ukraine convinced participating States of the importance of strengthening the mediation capacities of the OSCE. Thus, Switzerland's efforts in this regard, which included providing training for OSCE personnel and coaching for mediators, strengthening relations with the mediation support unit of the United Nations, received wide support from participating States. These enhanced capacities were also helpful in the context of the situation in and around Ukraine, with the OSCE mediation support unit being involved in the roundtables on national dialogue.

While civil society plays an important role within the human dimension, one of Switzerland's objectives was to strengthen the overall participation of civil society from all the regions of the OSCE in all three dimensions of the Organization's activities throughout the year. Four regional workshops, gath-

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11 This quote is from the *Report on Progress Made Under the Helsinki +40 Process*, circulated on July 22 under the reference CIO.GAL/129/14

ering more than 150 participants from over 40 countries, were organized to discuss the prevention of torture, tolerance, the rule of law, and region-specific concerns such as hate crime in the Balkans, the independence of the judiciary in South Caucasus, and freedom of association in Central Asia. These workshops also contributed to the recommendations adopted by the parallel civil society conference in Basel and were handed to the CiO.[12] The "Basel declaration on tolerance and non-discrimination" elaborated by civil society was another result of this process.

The Chairmanship also sought to integrate young people more closely into the work of the OSCE and with this in mind created a "model OSCE" for young people from the OSCE participating States. The youth ambassadors negotiated a "Youth Action Plan" with 144 recommendations reflecting their priorities for action and concerns regarding OSCE structures and the participating States. The model OSCE simulated the whole OSCE negotiation cycle and benefited from the considerable support provided by the participating States. In Basel, the ministers adopted a declaration on youth, acknowledging young people as an active force in supporting participating States in the implementation of OSCE commitments.

Despite the difficult situation in and around Ukraine, the 21st OSCE Ministerial Council, which took place on 4-5 December in Basel, can be considered a success. The Ministerial Council attracted no less than 53 Ministers and 1,300 participants. Moreover, under the Swiss Chairmanship, the participating States agreed in Basel on no less than eight decisions, eight declarations, two commemorative declarations and one ministerial statement in all three dimensions of the OSCE, as well as on cross-dimensional issues. The participating States agreed on decisions or declarations in the majority of the ten priority issues defined at the outset of the Chairmanship.

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12   Cf. *Civic Solidarity, Civil society recommendations to the participants of the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Basel*, 4-5 December 2014, available at: http://civicsolidarity. org/sites/default/files/civil_society_recommendations_to_the_mcm_in_basel_december_2 014_final.pdf.