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The OSCE Mediterranean Partnership Four Years after the Start of the “Arab Spring”

There is almost no need to define the long-standing relationship between the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation (MPCs), which goes back to the origins of the Organization and has evolved and matured throughout its history. It was at the 1993 Rome Ministerial Council that Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia, together with Israel, requested a closer and more structured relationship with the CSCE, before officially becoming “Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation” in 1995. They were joined by Jordan in 1998. All the key historical documents along the OSCE’s evolutionary pathway (the 1996 Lisbon Summit Declaration, the Charter for European Security adopted at the Istanbul Summit in 1999, the 2003 Maastricht Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century, the Astana Commemorative Declaration in 2010) also provided a framework for enhanced dialogue and co-operation with the Mediterranean region, together with more focused and operational documents such as the Permanent Council Decision on “further dialogue and co-operation with the Partners for Co-operation and exploring the scope for wider sharing of OSCE norms, principles and commitments with others” in 2003,¹ and the Madrid Ministerial Declaration on the OSCE Partners for Co-operation in 2007.²

Note: The views expressed in this article are those of the author alone and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the OSCE and its participating States.

- 1 OSCE, Permanent Council, Decision No. 571/Corrected re-issue, *Further Dialogue and Co-operation with the Partners for Co-operation and Exploring the Scope for Wider Sharing of OSCE Norms, Principles and Commitments with Others*, PC.DEC/571/Corr.1, 2 December 2003.
- 2 Ministerial Declaration on the OSCE Partners for Co-operation, MC.DOC/1/07 of 30 November 2007, in: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Fifteenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, 29 and 30 November 2007*, Madrid, 30 November 2007, pp. 3-4. A useful timeline of co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners up to 2004 is given in: Chronological Development of Co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and Asian Partners for Co-operation, Based on Adopted Documents, Annex 1 to the Report of the Chairperson of the Informal Group of Friends on the Implementation of Permanent Council Decision No. 571, The OSCE and its Partners for Co-operation, 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, pp. 106-134, here: pp. 121-130. A detailed account of developments concerning the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership can also be found in the background paper *Co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and with the Asian Partners for Co-operation* prepared by the Section for External Co-operation for the 2010 Review Conference on Co-operation with the Partners, RC.GAL/23/10/Rev.1, 22 October 2010. All the documents on which the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership is based are reproduced in the brochure issued in December 2014 by the Office of the Secretary General, External Co-operation Section, *The OSCE Mediterranean Partnership for Co-operation. A Compilation of Relevant Documents and Information*, pp. 22-41, available at: <http://www.osce.org/networks/132176>.

The historic changes that have swept across the Southern Mediterranean in the last four years have reinforced the relevance of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership in support of the Partners' path towards stability and democratization. Given their own experience of democratic transition, the OSCE participating States could not be passive spectators of the so-called "Arab Spring". After the 2011 Lithuanian Chairmanship of the OSCE fostered an internal debate on how the OSCE could assist its Mediterranean Partners, the Ministerial Council in Vilnius decided to "enhance further the Partnership for Co-operation by broadening dialogue, intensifying political consultations, strengthening practical co-operation and further sharing best practices and experience gained in the development of comprehensive, co-operative and indivisible security, in the three OSCE dimensions, according to the needs and priorities identified by the Partners".³

Where does the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership stand four years after the start of the Arab Spring and three years after Vilnius? Although the Partnership has entered a more operational and "results-oriented" phase, the Partners continue to express frustration. A number of technical improvements, a greater openness to other international organizations active in the region, and the development of a "track-II process" would admittedly reinforce the partnership. But beyond that, the Organization faces questions concerning the long-term nature of the Mediterranean Partnership in the coming years – also through the Helsinki +40 Process and possibly through the recently appointed Panel of Eminent Persons – including issues regarding the boundaries of the Mediterranean Partnership raised by the candidature of Libya, and the ability of the OSCE to spread its values more broadly within the Mediterranean world.

Despite Considerable Progress, Some Scepticism Remains on Both Sides

Two decades of "process-oriented" dialogue have closely associated the Mediterranean Partners with the OSCE's activities and the key events in the Organization's annual calendar. Today, the OSCE's dialogue with its Mediterranean Partners is based on a solid political framework. Interaction with the MPCs takes place at numerous OSCE forums, and covers a range of areas, including security issues.

3 Decision No. 5/11, Partners for Co-operation, MC.DEC/5/11, 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. 20-22, here: p. 21.

A Broad Political Framework for Dialogue

In 2014, the Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners celebrated its 20th anniversary.⁴ Serving as the main venue for regular dialogue with the Partners, it is held on average seven times per year at ambassadorial level and is chaired by the incoming chair of the OSCE (Serbia in 2014, Germany in 2015). Alongside regular briefings by the Chairmanship, Contact Group meetings usually include presentations by Mediterranean Partner countries on issues of specific interest,⁵ presentations by representatives of OSCE executive structures or partner organizations on activities with a Mediterranean dimension,⁶ and preparations for or follow-up to major OSCE events and activities. In between meetings of the Contact Group, day-to-day dialogue is maintained through technical meetings at the level of contact points.

The annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference provides an opportunity for the high-level exchange of views, and the generation of ideas and exploration of ways to enhance relations between the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners. Major topics recently have included “The Dialogue on the Future of European Security – A Mediterranean Perspective” (Valletta, Malta, 14 and 15 October 2010), “Democratic Transformation: Challenges and Opportunities in the Mediterranean Region” (Budva, Montenegro, 10 and 11 October 2011), “Economic Co-operation with Mediterranean Partners in the Democratic Transition Processes and Political Reforms” (Rome, 30 and 31 October 2012) and “Enhancing the Role of Women in Public, Political and Economic Life” (Monaco, 28-29 October 2013).

The weekly Permanent Council and Forum for Security Co-operation meetings, to which the Mediterranean Partners are invited as observers; the annual Ministerial Council meetings, in the margins of which the Partners have the opportunity to engage in high-level meetings with the OSCE Ministerial Troika and the OSCE Secretary General; the meetings of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly; yearly OSCE events, such as the Annual Security Review Conference, the Economic Forum, and the Human Dimension Im-

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- 4 The fourth CSCE Summit of Heads of State or Government, held in Budapest on 5-6 December 1994, decided to create “an informal, open-ended contact group, at the level of experts [...] within the framework of the Permanent Council in Vienna”, to conduct “a dialogue with these non-participating Mediterranean States in order to facilitate the interchange of information of mutual interest and the generation of ideas.” Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Budapest Review Conference and Summit Meeting 1994, Budapest Decisions, Part X (Mediterranean), in: Arie Bloed (ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Basic Documents 1993-1995*, pp. 129-189, here: p. 188, also available at: <http://www.osce.org/mc/39554>.
 - 5 Such as the intervention delivered by Dr Mohamed Chafik Sarsar, President of the High Independent Authority for Elections of Tunisia, to the Group on 28 March 2014; his statement circulated under PC.DEL/368/14, 2 April 2014.
 - 6 In 2014, Mr Amin Awad, Director of the Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa, Regional Refugee Coordinator for the Syria Situation at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), addressed the Group on 16 May 2014; his statement circulated under PC.DEL/514/14, 13 May 2014.

plementation Meeting – all of these also provide forums for dialogue between the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partner States.

Moreover, repeated calls for more technical and operational co-operation between the OSCE and its Partners have led in recent years to a growing list of specific projects.

An Impressive Set of Actions to Support Democratic Transition, Unfortunately Limited to Tunisia

“Young democracies” undergoing a period of transformation usually benefit from gradually making their new legislative processes more inclusive and consultative and better aligned with international standards. This results in legislation that is better understood and endorsed by the public, and thus has a better chance of proper implementation. Domestic election observation and regulation of political activities can help to deter electoral fraud and violations and promotes confidence in the honesty and integrity of the electoral process.⁷ That is why, at the Mediterranean Partner Countries’ Civil Society Conference held in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 4-5 December 2011, the representatives of civil society from OSCE participating States and the OSCE MPCs called on the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) “to support the process of constitutional and legal reform and create a platform to promote an independent judiciary through the translation and dissemination of existing documents, recommendations and related training events and to encourage the integration of professional legal communities including existing associations of lawyers”.⁸

From July 2012 to July 2013, upon request of the Tunisian authorities, ODIHR implemented two projects focused on “Promoting democratic structures among OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation”. These enabled the Office to further expand and formalize mechanisms of engagement by OSCE participating States with the MPCs. Within the framework of these projects, ODIHR focused on supporting Mediterranean Partners in undertaking key electoral and legislative reforms, consolidating democratic institutions, and increasing the participation of women in political and public life.⁹ As a basis for the exchange of good practices and the transfer of knowledge from the OSCE region, ODIHR has also translated and disseminated a number of its key publications into Arabic, making them available on the ODIHR

7 The successful observation of the 23 October 2011 Tunisian parliamentary elections by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly provided a clear example of the parliamentarians’ contribution to democratic progress in the region.

8 Mediterranean Partner Countries’ Civil Society Conference, Vilnius, Lithuania, 4-5 December 2011, *Conference Conclusions and Recommendations*, CIO.GAL/244/11, 5 December 2011, point 12.

9 Cf. OSCE ODIHR, *Co-operation between the OSCE Mediterranean Partners and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)*, ODIHR.GAL/16/13, 12 March 2013.

website.¹⁰ The second phase of this project, in 2014-2015, will aim to further expand ODIHR's engagement with the Partners for Co-operation in the fields of elections, parliamentary strengthening, women's political participation, the rule of law, human rights, and tolerance and non-discrimination.¹¹

Since 2012, ODIHR has implemented a total of 52 activities in the areas of elections, democratic governance, legislative assistance, and women's political participation, directly benefitting more than 806 civil society and government representatives in Mediterranean Partner countries.¹²

Unfortunately, Tunisia has remained an isolated case. The observation of the presidential elections held in Algeria in April 2004 by a special delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has not been followed by any further involvement of the OSCE, and co-operation between the Organization and both Morocco and Egypt on election observation seems to have been limited to a four-day training event on good practices in this field organized by ODIHR in the margins of the 2011 Mediterranean Conference in Budva.

Growing Technical Co-operation

“There has been a lot of form and little substance. Much of the focus has been on improving dialogue and on the voluntary implementation of OSCE commitments by partners, but there has been little practical cooperation”.¹³ This was the assessment of the participants in the workshop on the “OSCE-Mediterranean Partnership and the Arab Uprisings”, held on 25 October 2011 at the premises of the International Peace Institute (IPI) in Vienna. Is that still the truth three years on?

The overview of project proposals and activities for co-operation with Mediterranean Partners, circulated on 6 March 2014,¹⁴ enumerates 23 ongoing projects, whose topics correspond to the “List of Potential Projects and Topics of Potential Co-operation with the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation” circulated in 2012¹⁵ and to the increasingly complex array of threats and risks faced by the Mediterranean countries from both outside and

10 Including the sixth edition of the *Election Observation Handbook*, which provides a detailed description of the OSCE/ODIHR observation methodology, available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/68439>.

11 See the statement by Beatriz Balbin, First Deputy Director OSCE/ODIHR at the 2013 OSCE Mediterranean Conference on “Enhancing the Role of Women in Public, Political and Economic Life”, Monaco, 28-29 October 2013, ODIHR.GAL/77/13, 1 November 2013.

12 See Richard Lappin, OSCE/ODIHR Senior Election Adviser, *Remarks on OSCE/ODIHR Support to Electoral Processes in Tunisia*, Meeting of the Mediterranean Group of Contact, 28 March 2014, ODIHR.GAL/14/14, 2 April 2014.

13 *The OSCE-Mediterranean Partnership and the Arab Uprisings*, report of the workshop held by the International Peace Institute (IPI) in Vienna on 25 October 2011, CIO.GAL/252/11, p. 4.

14 See *Overview of project proposals and activities for co-operation with Mediterranean Partners*, SEC.GAL/31/14, 6 March 2014.

15 See *List of Potential Projects and Topics of Potential Co-operation with the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation*, SEC.GAL/51/12, 15 March 2012.

inside their borders. Some of these projects are highlighted in the newly issued brochure on the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership for Co-operation.¹⁶

In the field of counter-terrorism, representatives of the Mediterranean Partners were among the 80 experts that attended the Regional Expert Workshop on the “Implementation of the Universal Legal Instruments against Terrorism as a Way to Enhance Counter-Terrorism Cooperation in the Mediterranean Basin”, jointly organized by the OSCE and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on 17-18 September 2013 in Malaga, Spain, where legal and operational aspects of the investigation and prosecution of terrorism cases were discussed. A “Malaga follow-up” meeting took place in Valletta, Malta, on 16-17 September 2014, with a special focus on kidnapping for ransom, which is an issue of growing concern for the OSCE region. The OSCE Transnational Threats Department (TNTD) is also working extensively on violent extremism and radicalization that leads to terrorism: Its guidebook on a community-policing approach to that matter, published jointly with ODIHR in March 2014, is now available in Arabic.¹⁷ Counter-terrorism has been also defined as one of the three areas of co-operation between the OSCE and Egypt, following the visit of the Secretary General of the Organization in Cairo in February 2014.

Issues such as water scarcity, land degradation, environmentally induced migration, climate change, and energy security were discussed at expert level at the first Participatory Workshop on Environment and Security Issues in the Southern Mediterranean Region, which was held in Amman, Jordan, from 18 to 22 June 2012. An expert Workshop on Sustainable Energy in the Southern Mediterranean was held in Vienna by the Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) on 29 April 2013.¹⁸

Issues related to migration have been high on the agenda of the Partnership these past two years. Early CSCE meetings already addressed the political, social, economic, and humanitarian factors behind migration, and stressed the relevance of this issue to stability and security in the CSCE area, and the need for a global and shared approach.¹⁹ In 2009, plans were also made to involve the Partners in a regional platform for dialogue on migration

16 Cf. *The OSCE Mediterranean Partnership for Co-operation*, cited above (Note 2), pp. 43-49.

17 OSCE/ODIHR, *Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach*, Vienna, February 2014, available at: <http://www.osce.org/atu/111438>.

18 On 8 July 2014, the OSCE also hosted a one-day conference to discuss the benefits of water security. The keynote was delivered by His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, a keen promoter of water co-operation, and until recently chairman of the UN Secretary General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation. This OSCE Security Days conference assessed the security-related challenges and benefits of water co-operation, and took stock of the role the OSCE has played so far and will play in the future in water diplomacy.

19 See *CSCE Mediterranean Seminar, Valletta, 17-21 May 1993*, CSCE Communication No. 161, Prague, 26 May 1993, Chairman’s Summary, p. 4.

and security issues.²⁰ The special situation of some OSCE participating States in that regard,²¹ the alarming statistics,²² and several major incidents, including the October 2013 tragedy off the coast of Lampedusa, have yet again demonstrated the urgent need to act.

The OSCE has tackled the issue from two different angles: The Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings carried out in-depth consultations on human trafficking with the MPCs through the organization of a series of events in 2013.²³ In addition, the OCEEA's comprehensive Handbook on Establishing Effective Labour Migration Policies, elaborated jointly with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), which contains policy models, practical guidelines, and good practice examples, has been translated into Arabic.²⁴

In the politico-military dimension of security, after a year devoted to outreach activities promoting the OSCE Code of Conduct in 2013,²⁵ the issue of illicit trafficking in small arms was the main topic of the 2014 Mediterranean Conference held in Neum, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in October 2014. Following a needs assessment mission conducted by the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) in October 2014, Tunisia and the OSCE have also agreed on a "tailor-made" mode of technical co-operation on this matter that

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- 20 The Ministerial Council "tasks the Permanent Council [...] to *inter alia*: Provide a broad regional platform for dialogue on migration and security issues, both among OSCE participating States and between participating States and Partners for Co-operation [...]", Decision No. 5/09, Migration Management, MC.DEC/5/09 of 2 December 2009, in: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Seventeenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, 1 and 2 December 2009*, Athens, 2 December 2009, pp. 24-26, here: p. 25, point 5. A proposal to create a working group on migration aimed at establishing an expert overview of the shared challenges and the responsibilities in this area was also made in March of the same year, see Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to Vienna, *The Future of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership. The Moroccan Vision*, PC.DEL/213/09/Rev.1, 31 March 2009, p. 4.
- 21 In ten years (2003-2013), Malta, the smallest, most southerly, and most densely populated EU member state, has received 17,743 immigrants. In 2012 alone, 1,890 people arrived at Malta by sea from North Africa.
- 22 See European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX), *Annual Risk Analysis 2014*, Warsaw, May 2014, pp. 8 and 30ff., available at: http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2014.pdf.
- 23 Cf. International seminar on "Co-operation to Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings in the Mediterranean Region", held in Rome on 8 February 2013; expert meeting on "Human Trafficking in the Mediterranean: Promoting Access to Justice", held in Vienna on 10 May 2013; expert meeting on "Co-operation to Enhance the Prevention of Human Trafficking and Labour Exploitation in the Mediterranean Region", held in Vienna on 7 October 2013.
- 24 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)/International Organization for Migration (IOM)/International Labour Organization (ILO), *Handbook on Establishing Effective Labour Migration Policies*, Mediterranean Edition, Vienna 2007, at: <http://www.osce.org/ar/eea/29631>.
- 25 After the regional conference on the Code of Conduct hosted by Malta (11-13 September 2013), the Arabic version of the Code was presented to the League of Arab States at a workshop organized by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Cairo in May 2013. A new outreach conference should take place in Tunis in 2015.

includes border management aspects, and Egypt has indicated its interest in working with the Organization on this challenge.

In 2012, my predecessor at the OSCE's External Co-operation Section was still able to comment that "despite the clear and repeated message stating the OSCE readiness to help and the need to be formally asked in order to engage, no official request emerged from any of the Mediterranean Partners".²⁶ Three years on, this is no longer the case: All four North African Partners have since expressed their priorities and wishes for co-operation in *notes verbales* received by the OSCE Secretariat in 2013 and 2014.

All in all, even if much more could be done, it appears difficult – and may even reveal a bias – to deny that the OSCE really does provide the Mediterranean Partners with an opportunity to expand dialogue and co-operation and to benefit from its normative work, accumulated expertise, and best practices, in a "win-win" approach at regional level. Why, therefore, are there still so many persistent misperceptions of this work?

A Persistent Gap between Reality and Perception

In the 2011 edition of the OSCE Yearbook, Rita Marascalchi and Oleksandr Pavlyuk from the OSCE's Section for External Co-operation wrote the following: "Despite the fact that much progress has been achieved [...] neither the Partners nor the participating States have seemed to be fully satisfied with the state of the Mediterranean Partnership in recent years".²⁷ The situation remains essentially the same in 2014, as confirmed by periodical "strong" statements made by some ambassadors of the Partner States at the Mediterranean Contact Group. As for the OSCE participating States, the generally low attendance at Group meetings (there have been a few exceptions) also confirms that the Mediterranean Partnership is still not the highest issue on the delegations' agenda.

The fact that OSCE support and assistance are supposed to be demand-driven²⁸ and the Mediterranean Partners to have ownership of this process might have prompted some OSCE participating States to make specific requests by Mediterranean Partners a condition for the provision of concrete assistance. The low take-up by the Partners of existing opportunities, such as short-term visits of representatives to OSCE Missions, the inclusion of ob-

26 Rita Marascalchi, The OSCE response to the Arab Spring and the implications for the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership, in: *Security and Human Rights* 3/2012, pp. 175-183, p. 177.

27 Rita Marascalchi/Oleksandr Pavlyuk, The OSCE and Change in the South Mediterranean: A New Opportunity for the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership? In: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2011*, Baden-Baden 2012, pp. 427-439, here: p. 435.

28 As stated at the 2004 Sofia Ministerial Council and constantly reconfirmed since, "co-operation and interaction with Partner States should remain voluntary and be driven by demand." *Report of the Chairperson of the Informal Group of Friends on the implementation of Permanent Council Decision No. 571*, cited above (Note 2), p. 109.

servers in ODIHR electoral missions,²⁹ and internships for young graduate students and placements for young experts in the Secretariat, may also have discouraged further initiatives.

As a consequence, the need to “reorient” the Mediterranean Partnership has become a mantra in recent years.³⁰ Additional efforts seem to be needed to strengthen the Mediterranean Partnership, the potential of which has not yet been fully exploited. Will 2014-2015 be “the time [...] to accelerate the exploration of new avenues in our quest to give true meaning to the concept of partnership?”³¹

How Can the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership Be Reinforced and Strengthened?

Improving existing mechanisms and better monitoring the recommendations that have already been adopted would, in the short term, give more coherence to the Partnership. Better co-ordination with other international organizations acting in the Mediterranean region, under the guidance of the OSCE Secretary General, would offer an “energy multiplier”. Last but not least, the development of a track-II process would inject new fresh ideas into the Partnership.

Better Follow-up of Recommendations and Proposals

The importance of enhancing the role and effectiveness of the Contact Group has been often stressed. In 2007, Ambassador Taous Feroukhi of Algeria proposed establishing a mechanism to ensure better interaction between the Contact Group and the Permanent Council.³² Again in 2010, the Lithuanian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group suggested considering the presentation by the Chair of the Mediterranean Contact Group to the Permanent Council of the work of the Group.³³

Better follow-up of the recommendations made in meetings of the Mediterranean Contact Group and at the Mediterranean Conferences has been requested by the Partner States. As underlined in Switzerland and Serbia’s Joint Workplan, the goal for 2014-2015 should be to “deepen the dialogue and co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners particularly by imple-

29 Both possibilities based on PC.DEC/233, 11 June 1998.

30 Cf. Ambassador Omar Zniber, Morocco: Reorienting relations to emphasize concrete action, in: *OSCE Magazine*, December 2007, p. 16-17.

31 Ambassador Antti Turunen, Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation: Time to give genuine meaning to the concept of partnership, in: *ibid.*, pp. 13-14, here: p. 14.

32 Cf. Ambassador Taous Feroukhi, Algeria: Promising prospects on the partnership path, in: *ibid.*, p. 14.

33 Cf. *OSCE Chairmanship Perception Paper on the Follow-up to the 2010 Mediterranean Conference*, CIO.GAL/6/11, 18 January 2011.

menting measures identified at the Partners meetings and conferences”.³⁴ “Establishing an implementation committee that would be responsible for following up on all decisions at the political level”³⁵ is one possible option. Further to the brochure published by the Secretariat in December 2014, an extensive “mapping” of the existing Partnership could be requested, which should also include stocktaking of past and ongoing co-operation projects in search of lessons learned to be applied to future initiatives.

In a joint food-for-thought paper issued within the framework of the 2010 Review Conference, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia stated the need to assess and evaluate the current working methods of the Mediterranean Partnership, including the annual Mediterranean Conference. In order to ensure a more robust determination to follow up the discussions, they proposed to devote the closing session to drawing conclusions and identifying key suggestions and recommendations to be discussed at a special Contact Group meeting following the Conference. A timeline should be developed for the implementation of these proposals and co-ordinators assigned with the task of convening informal working groups to submit concrete suggestions regarding their implementation. Within a period of six months after the convening of the Conference, a report should be submitted to the Contact Group on the state of implementation of these proposals, and a sub-item should also be devoted to this topic in each Contact Group meeting. In addition to this, a report on the work of the Contact Group should be presented to the Permanent Council on a twice-yearly basis, thus raising the visibility of the activities of the Contact Group.³⁶

Following these suggestions, and also taking into account the proposal presented by the OSCE Secretary General at the Forum of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE on the Mediterranean, held in 2009 in Athens, related to “the establishment of a system of coordinators for specific topics, to assist the Chair of the Contact Group”,³⁷ the 2010 Lithuanian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group also proposed assigning co-ordinators to promote work on specific issues by leading informal consultations and negotiations, in co-ordination with the Chairmanship and the Chair of the Contact

34 Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the OSCE, the United Nations and the International Organizations/Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the OSCE and other International Organizations in Vienna, *Joint Workplan of Switzerland and Serbia*, PC.DEL/600/13, 28 June 2013, p. 5.

35 Ambassador Mohamed Daouas, Tunisia: Increased interdependence calls for new vision, in: *OSCE Magazine*, cited above (Note 30), p. 17.

36 Cf. *Joint Food-for-Thought Paper by Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia on Follow up of the Mediterranean Conferences*, RC.DEL/256/10/rev.1, 21 October 2010.

37 “Each Mediterranean partner would be responsible for a matter of choice, with a mandate to seek the views of participating States to elaborate concrete proposals (including projects run under the Partnership Fund), and serve as a reference during the monitoring phase”, quoted by see Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to Vienna, *Food-for-thought Paper on the effectiveness of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership*, PC.DEL/438/10, 21 May 2010.

Group.³⁸ Mediterranean Partners have also repeatedly highlighted the need to avoid making the Conference's agenda too broad, and to ensure continuity with previous seminars, while capitalizing on their recommendations, taking care to explore ways to implement them.³⁹

Representatives of civil society should be allowed to participate in the Mediterranean Conference. Though external incentives and pressures are crucial aspects of institutional action designed to aid democratization, domestic mobilization is an essential component of this process and can hardly be imported. For the first time, the OSCE Mediterranean Seminar held in Tel Aviv in 2007 was able to hold a side event with NGOs, which brought a breath of fresh air to the debate and a wealth of recommendations and ideas on how to promote tolerance and non-discrimination in the participating States and, most importantly, in the Mediterranean Partners themselves. In 2008, another civil society side event was organized on the margins of the Conference hosted in Amman. The representatives of civil society from OSCE participating States and the Partners then met in Vilnius in 2011 to share experiences and lessons learned from civil society engagement in democratic transition, and to develop future partnership and co-operation.⁴⁰ Such events should be encouraged and developed.

Finally, it could also be considered a matter of regret that no conference has been hosted by a Mediterranean Partner since Cairo in 2009.⁴¹ A new rotation system could be agreed for the future, and 2015 should see resumption of the hosting of the Mediterranean Conference by a Partner country.

At a technical level, OSCE co-operation could be better tailored to individual needs. Given that the situations of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners are very different judged by most standards, the OSCE approach cannot be a one-size-fits-all policy. Before Vilnius 2011, the OSCE had mostly interacted with the Mediterranean Partners as a group. This approach at times faced the obstacle of finding common ground among countries that are so diverse and divided. It also prevents Partners that would be ready to intensify their relationships with the OSCE from progressing at a faster pace. Only after the Arab Spring was the possibility of pursuing a more individualized approach taken into consideration. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive, and

38 Cf. *OSCE Chairmanship Perception Paper on the Follow-up to the 2010 Mediterranean Conference*, cited above (Note 33).

39 See *Egyptian Food for Thought Paper on 2008 Mediterranean Conference*, PC.DEL/1004/08, 17 November 2008, and *The Future of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership. The Moroccan Vision*, cited above (Note 20).

40 See *Mediterranean Partner Countries' Civil Society Conference, Vilnius, Lithuania, 4-5 December 2011, Conference Conclusions and Recommendations*, CIO.GAL/244/11, 5 December 2011.

41 The Arab Republic of Egypt hosted the annual Mediterranean Seminar five times (in 1995, 1997, 2004, 2006, and 2009). Jordan hosted it twice (in 2003 in Aqaba, and in 1999 in Amman). One meeting was held in Tel Aviv on 18-19 December 2007. But other Partner States have never hosted a meeting.

the success of the Partnership is likely to depend on striking the right balance between them.

Last but not least, some procedural constraints could be removed. At the IPI workshop in 2011, the point was made that the OSCE's room for manoeuvre in providing assistance to its MPCs is hampered by limitations on out-of-area activities. Participants suggested that this caveat to OSCE activities should be lifted – which would probably be impossible to agree on – or at least given some flexibility.⁴²

The “List of Potential Projects and Topics of Potential Co-operation with the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation”⁴³ produced to complement the ministerial decision adopted in Vilnius in an effort to raise awareness among Partners and donors did indeed create movement. But it is now acting as a brake on further progress and needs to be updated.

The Partnership Fund, created in 2007 to promote engagement and foster deeper relations with the Partners for Co-operation, should also be reviewed.⁴⁴ Seven years after its creation, the Fund has not had the desired impact: The donor states have little interest in funding it, rather than directly funding projects, the latter option providing more visibility for their sponsorship.

In that regard, finding new sources of financing will be one of the challenges the OSCE needs to face in the years to come. Exploring venues for furthering potential synergies and complementarities with international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) could offer innovative options. Should Mediterranean Partners take seriously the OSCE's offer of support, more financial backing would be needed to provide a credible and effective response.

Further Strengthening and Developing Co-operation with other Organizations

As the largest regional organization under the UN Charter, the OSCE can act as the platform for co-operation between other “out-of-area” regional, sub-regional, and multilateral organizations in the Mediterranean region. Most of the Mediterranean Partners are members of such organizations. Interaction among international institutions with a Mediterranean dimension is crucial: A synergetic approach provides an additional forum for sharing the OSCE experience beyond the area of the participating States, and additionally contrib-

42 *The OSCE-Mediterranean Partnership and the Arab Uprisings*, cited above (Note 13), p. 4.

43 See *List of Potential Projects and Topics of Potential Co-operation with the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation*, cited above (Note 15).

44 The Fund can be used to finance two main types of initiative: participation by representatives from the Partners for Co-operation in existing OSCE activities and events and targeted activities designed to encourage the Partners for Co-operation to voluntarily implement OSCE norms, principles, commitments, and best practices. It is financed through extra-budgetary contributions.

utes to achieve the goal of building a common Euro-Mediterranean space; it helps avoid duplication and enables each side to better complement the other's roles and capacities; it allows the exchange of views on lessons learned, goals, mandates, and procedures; other international organizations can act as a multiplier factor and ensure local ownership in disseminating the OSCE's values and experiences.

The Arab Spring provided prospects for greater regional convergence towards a set of common principles and values. On 3 March 2011, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Azubalis, and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon discussed the need to co-ordinate international efforts to assist North Africa, and the possibility of creating a co-ordination mechanism among relevant international organizations under UN leadership.

The EU, NATO, and the OSCE each have their own formats for co-operation in the Mediterranean. In 2002, upon an invitation by the Chairman of NATO's Mediterranean Co-operation Group, a representative of the OSCE Secretariat briefed delegates of the then 19 NATO nations on the OSCE Mediterranean Dialogue, two weeks after a representative of the NATO International Secretariat briefed the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group on NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue. A NATO representative also attended the Contact Group with the MPCs.⁴⁵ During that same meeting, another proposal submitted for consideration suggested convening expert-level meetings between NATO and the OSCE on matters of common concern with reference to Mediterranean-related issues. Furthermore, it was proposed to organize a periodical (annual or twice-yearly) exchange of views and expertise among the OSCE, NATO, and the EU with respect to their complementary Mediterranean dialogues and partnerships. Representatives from the EU Presidency and the Council of Europe secretariats were also invited to brief participants on their Mediterranean frameworks for co-operation.

At the Workshop for Experts from the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation held in Vienna in July 2000, the proposal was made to organize "a Conference by the OSCE Secretariat to bring together representatives of all the organizations conducting a Mediterranean Dialogue, including OSCE, EU, WEU, NATO, NATO PA and Council of Europe, as well as the Mediterranean Partners".⁴⁶ On 11 February 2004, at the Munich Security Conference, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, urged the OSCE, the European Union, and NATO to co-operate more closely on issues related to their Mediterranean Partner States, and noted again that an EU-NATO-OSCE-Mediterranean conference could perhaps provide a good start for intensifying co-operation in the region. This idea could be

45 See *Report on participation by an OSCE Secretariat representative in NATO's Mediterranean Co-operation Group (MCG)*, Brussels, 12 July 2002, SEC.GAL/139/02, 19 July 2002.

46 *Report on Workshop for Experts from the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, Vienna, 17-19 July 2000*, SEC.GAL/95/00, 31 August 2000, p. 2.

revisited. Unfortunately, little practical co-operation has been implemented, despite the noticeable exception of the workshop on “Water Scarcity, Land Degradation and Desertification in the Mediterranean Region – Environment and Security Aspects” organized by the OSCE, in co-operation with NATO Public Diplomacy Division, in Valencia, Spain on 10-11 December 2007. Migration issues, where the impact of EU policies is important, could become a field of more interconnection between the organizations acting in the Mediterranean, as could Security Sector Reform Capacity, mediation, and interfaith dialogue.

The dynamic role assumed by the OSCE Secretary General in recent years allows better structured relations with regional organizations, such as the Arab League,⁴⁷ and wider inclusiveness and deepening of partnerships. But more could be done, for instance with the 5+5 Dialogue⁴⁸ and the Union for the Mediterranean.

The OSCE’s structures and institutions can also interact effectively with partner organizations. ODIHR’s excellent collaboration with the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe in providing legal reviews could be replicated in Tunisia and elsewhere. And we have already mentioned the fruitful co-operation between the OCEEA, the IOM, and the ILO on a comprehensive Labour Migration Handbook, which was presented in Rabat in 2007.

The New-Med Track-II Initiative

Public opinion, civil society organizations, and social networks are rapidly growing in relevance in the policy-making process. This underlines the importance of think tanks and public diplomacy institutions in analysing re-

47 After his initial visit to the headquarters of the League of Arab States (LAS) in September 2011, Secretary General Lamberto Zannier visited Cairo in February 2014, where he met his LAS counterpart, Dr Nabil El Araby, and opened the OSCE-LAS Workshop for the presentation of OSCE handbooks and publications available in Arabic and the third Meeting of Regional, Sub-regional and other International Organizations on Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation; a second OSCE-LAS workshop should take place in 2015. H. E. Amr Moussa, former Secretary-General of the LAS, addressed the Permanent Council on 17 April 2008.

48 The Western Mediterranean Forum, also known as the 5+5 Dialogue, includes Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia, and acts as a confidence-building forum. As Elizabeth Abela and Monika Wohlfeld rightly point out, the 5+5 Dialogue is actually the most ambitious proposal for a Conference on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean based on the CSCE model. It was indeed during the 1990 CSCE meeting in Palma de Mallorca that this proposal was developed by the so-called “4+5 Group”, consisting of four Southern European members of the then European Economic Community (EEC) and the five participants of the Arab Maghreb Union, with Malta as an observer, see: Elizabeth Abela/Monika Wohlfeld, *The Mediterranean Security Dimension. OSCE’s Relations with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation*, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 1999*, Baden-Baden 2000, pp. 435-446, here: p. 439. The European Commission, the Arab Maghreb Union, the Union for the Mediterranean, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, and the League of Arab States are observers of the 5+5 Dialogue; it is conceivable that the OSCE could also join the group.

gional trends and drivers for change. Use of track-II diplomacy can help solidify contacts, dialogue, and mutual understanding, leading to a cross-fertilization of ideas and recommendations. These are particularly fundamental tools for early warning and conflict prevention.

Already in 2004, on the basis of the 2003 OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21st Century and in order to complement relations at the intergovernmental level, the OSCE CPC suggested establishing closer relations with research institutes and strategic centres in the Partner States. The CPC also proposed creating a research network, with a particular accent on early-warning functions.⁴⁹ The possibility of facilitating track-II diplomacy on issues of relevance to the Mediterranean Partnership was then identified by the Lithuanian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group in 2010 as one of the topics worth further consideration.⁵⁰ In a vision paper on the future of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership, Morocco had previously also recalled its proposal concerning the establishment of a network of Mediterranean research institutes and universities involved in soft and hard security issues.⁵¹

That is why, at the conference on “The OSCE and a New Context for Regional Cooperation in the Mediterranean”, held on 28 May 2012 in Rome, the Italian minister of foreign affairs launched the idea of a centre for standing interaction between the OSCE and think tanks and civil society across the Mediterranean. The aims of this proposed centre would be to help generate and sustain the production of new ideas and approaches, provide a place for sharing experiences, and raise the profile of the OSCE and awareness of the values and the work of the Organization with respect to the Mediterranean Partners.⁵² Following the establishment of a Mediterranean focal point in the Office of the Secretary General, which aims to create a new network of researchers and academics with expertise on comprehensive security issues in the Mediterranean region, and an international workshop on the “Global Mediterranean: A New Agenda for Multilateral Security Cooperation”, held in Turin, Italy, on 5 June 2014, the “New-Med” research network has been created, a new OSCE-related Mediterranean track-II initiative that benefits from the engagement and involvement of the OSCE and the six MPCs.

The New-Med network was consolidated at the international seminar “Towards Helsinki +40. The OSCE, the Global Mediterranean, and the future of Cooperative Security”, which was held in Rome on 18 September 2014 under the joint auspices of the Swiss Chairmanship of the OSCE and the

49 See *CPC comments building on the Food For Thought paper on potential additional fields of co-operation and interaction with the OSCE Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation*, SEC.GAL/131/04, 27 May 2004, pp. 2-3.

50 See *OSCE Chairmanship Perception Paper on the Follow-up to the 2010 Mediterranean Conference*, cited above (Note 33).

51 See *The Future of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership. The Moroccan Vision*, cited above (Note 20), p. 2.

52 See *Concept Paper: Italian OSCE-MED Proposal*, PC.DEL/940/12, 23 October 2012.

Italian Presidency of the EU. Proposals floated during the seminar have been collected and offered as a contribution to the discussions that are taking place in Vienna in the context of the Helsinki +40 Process.

New-Med represents an innovation with respect to other networks focusing on the Mediterranean, which have been traditionally EU-centred or EU-initiated. It is indeed the first track-II network devoted to Mediterranean affairs to be linked to the OSCE. New-Med could act in tandem with other track-II processes, such as the sub-regional network of the think-tanks of the 5+5 countries set up by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), to develop research on how to promote regional integration and co-operation between the countries concerned.

However, there are clear limits to how far such involvement might go: Most of the Mediterranean Partner States do not have well developed academic networks, and at least some of them are likely to keep the process under strict control.

Looking Ahead: Challenges and Prospects for the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership in 2015 and Beyond

In the longer term, significant challenges are likely to arise: first, the question of the boundaries of the Mediterranean Partnership, raised by the controversial application of Libya in 2013; then the future of the relationship between the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners and its recognition in the Helsinki +40 strategic vision; and finally, the ability of the OSCE to provide a replicable model for the southern shore of the Mediterranean, which is directly confronted by the lack of a lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East.

Defining the Boundaries of the Mediterranean Partnership: The Issue of Libya

In our fast-moving and ever-changing world, it may appear natural for the OSCE to develop deeper relations with neighbouring areas, as well as to consider new requests for admission as Partners for Co-operation. However, as the IPI pointed out in 2011: “There is also a lack of clarity about the geographical extent of the dialogue – who’s in and who’s out, and why?”⁵³ Even though the OSCE participating States agreed in 2000 on criteria for considering future applications for partnership,⁵⁴ the only real limits to this strategy are those of consensus-gathering and political timing.

53 *The OSCE-Mediterranean Partnership and the Arab Uprisings*, cited above (Note 13), p. 4.

54 In view of the growing interest in partnership status with the OSCE, in 2000, the participating States tasked an informal open-ended working group with developing recommendations for considering future applications for partnership. The resulting document, known as the Ladsous report (PC.DEL.344/01/Rev.3, 28 June 2001) highlighted the idea

In recent years, the Mediterranean Partners have repeatedly called on the participating States to consider offering Partner status to other countries in the Mediterranean, such as Syria, Libya, Lebanon, and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), which formally requested the status of Partner twice, in 2004 and again in 2008.⁵⁵

In 2011, Austria, supported by other participating States, suggested that Libya be invited to join the Partnership, arguing that the OSCE expertise in border management and institution-building would be valuable in the country's current situation.⁵⁶ On 13 June 2013, Libya indeed applied to become an OSCE Partner for Co-operation.

The arguments in favor of granting Partner status to Libya are obvious. The whole idea of Partnership is based on an ongoing process of acceptance of the OSCE's common *acquis*; indubitably, a Libya progressively coming to terms with that *acquis* is much better off than one which is not. The OSCE and its participating States would thus send a powerful political message in support of stability in Libya, which is currently in the grip of anarchy. As already underlined, the OSCE is a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, with a mandate to develop relations with its adjacent regions as a means to promote security within the OSCE region itself. In order to interact most effectively with an adjacent region such as the Mediterranean, it is necessary to deal with that region as a whole. Hence it is vital to have Libya on board.

Yet here too there was a failure to reach a consensus at the Ministerial Council in Kyiv in December 2013. Expansion of the OSCE's area of co-operation has to take into consideration the arguments of those opposing "out-of-area" engagement, especially in the light of the discussion on the OSCE's engagement with Afghanistan (an OSCE Asian Partner for Co-operation since 2003). Though the expansion of the geographic scope of the Partnership may well enliven and empower the Partner States and their agenda, Libya's domestic situation – which is currently out of control – may

of "affinity" that should govern any decision on the subject, opting for an open and flexible approach rather than defining strict criteria for partnership. New applications should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

55 See Permanent Mission of Spain to the OSCE, *Food for Thought Paper on the Mediterranean OSCE Partnership. The Palestinian National Authority as OSCE's Mediterranean Partner for Co-operation*, PC.DEL/400/08, 26 May 2008, and CIO.GAL/193/08, 19 December 2008. In November 2004, the Palestine Central Elections Commission (the independent and neutral administrator of the Palestinian electoral process) also addressed a letter to the Bulgarian OSCE Chairman-in-Office, formally inviting the OSCE to observe the Palestinian elections. Later that year, the PNA, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, addressed another letter to the Chairman-in-Office that included an urgent invitation to attend the Presidential elections and also asking the OSCE to grant it status as Mediterranean Partner for Co-operation (cf. *ibid.*, p. 3). Without consensus on this matter within the OSCE so far and despite successive Chairmanships' best efforts, the PNA sometimes participates in OSCE events as guest of the host country, on an ad hoc basis; for instance, it participated in the OSCE 2008 Mediterranean Conference in Amman at the invitation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

56 See the letter circulated by Austria on 13 September 2011 (PC.DEL/858/11).

also endanger the whole process. Libya's absence might nonetheless remain a problem for the OSCE, as dealing with small-arms dissemination or migration in the Mediterranean basin would make little sense were Libya not included.

Inviting interested potential Mediterranean Partner countries and other regional actors to periodical "outreach meetings", could offer a middle way. This could be held back to back with Mediterranean Contact Group meetings and could also serve as preparation for eventual Partner status.

Making the Partnership More Strategic. The Mediterranean and the Helsinki +40 Process

The 40th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act will also be the 40th anniversary of the recognition of the Mediterranean dimension and its relevance for security and stability in Europe: From the very beginning of the Helsinki process, a number of states from all sides of the Mediterranean⁵⁷ pioneered a special relationship between the non-European Mediterranean States and the OSCE, based on a linking of European security and that of the Mediterranean region.

The MPCs have contributed to all the key steps in the evolution of the OSCE. They were invited to make contributions to the Preparatory Committee of the 1990 CSCE Summit Meeting in Paris.⁵⁸ Switzerland, as Chair of the Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners, reported on contributions to the so called "Security Model" at the 1996 Lisbon Summit and, in 1999, the Mediterranean Partners were invited to participate in one of the meetings of its main framework for negotiations, the Security Model Committee.⁵⁹ In 2005, the six MPCs closely followed the work of the Panel of Eminent Persons on the future of the OSCE,⁶⁰ in September of the same year, they provided a joint set of proposals at the closing session of the High Level Consultations on OSCE reform, which was delivered by Algeria on behalf of the Group.⁶¹

At the launch of the Corfu Process in 2009, it was decided that the Partners would be invited to contribute to the discussion "on an ad hoc basis" and

57 Malta, a European country at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, has long been a forceful champion of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership, hosting the first ever CSCE meeting on Mediterranean issues back in 1979 (and then again in 1993).

58 Mervat Tallawy, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Republic of Austria, delivered a statement at the preparatory committee on 24 September 1990.

59 Cf. Abela/Wohlfeld, cited above (Note 48), p. 444.

60 See *Considerations of the delegations of the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation for the attention of the members of the Panel of Eminent Persons on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE, established by MC.DEC/16/04 of 7 December 2004*, PC.DEL/379/05, 13 May 2005.

61 *Strengthening the Mediterranean dimension of the OSCE*, delivered by Ambassador Taous Feroukhi of Algeria, PC.DEL/873/05, 14 September 2005.

“after close consultation with participating States”.⁶² Throughout 2009, Greece, which held the OSCE Chairmanship, did its best to keep the Partners for Co-operation informed on developments in the Process through a series of informal briefings. At least one Mediterranean Partner (Morocco) effectively contributed to the Corfu Process by means of two food-for-thought papers on the future and effectiveness of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership.⁶³

As the OSCE moves towards the 40th anniversary of the CSCE Helsinki Final Act in 2015, the issue of how to shape the Organization’s relations with the Partners should also be an item for discussion, as it has been throughout the history of the Organization. At the 2013 OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Monaco, the representative of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly recommended the inclusion of a strong Mediterranean dimension in the Helsinki +40 Process.⁶⁴ The Partners expect to contribute actively to the Process, thus participating in a wide-ranging discussion that aims at strengthening the OSCE and placing it on a new foundation.

Although the Mediterranean Partners are not a homogeneous regional group, the Helsinki +40 Process could allow them to present joint approaches. In particular, it could provide with the opportunity to “Incorporat[e] the Mediterranean’s strategic concept in its entirety into the fundamental objectives of the OSCE”,⁶⁵ as the lack of a clear vision of the nature, aims, and goals of the OSCE Mediterranean dialogue has sometimes been pointed out.⁶⁶

The Mongolian Ambassador to the OSCE has been entrusted with coordinating one of the eight clusters of the Helsinki +40 Roadmap, namely “to increase interaction with the partners for cooperation and with international and regional organisations working in similar fields”. In March 2014, he organized an informal workshop for Heads of Missions from all Partners for Co-operation in collaboration with IPI. At this meeting, the possibility of establishing strategic partnerships was discussed.

As for the high-level Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project, established by Switzerland at the Ministerial Council in Basel, in close co-operation with the incoming Serbian and German Chairmanships, and chaired by Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger of Germany, it is

62 *Decision No. 1/09, Furthering the Corfu Process*, MC.DEC/1/09 of 2 December 2009, in: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Seventeenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, 1 and 2 December 2009*, Athens, 2 December 2009, pp. 15-16, here: p. 16, point 4.

63 Cf. *The Future of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership. The Moroccan Vision*, cited above (Note 20), and PC.DEL/438/10, cited above (Note 37).

64 Cf. *Perception Paper by the Swiss Chair of the Mediterranean Contact Group 2013*, PC.DEL/976/13, 21 November 2013, pp. 2-3.

65 Ambassador Mohamed Daouas, cited above (Note 35), p. 17.

66 *The OSCE-Mediterranean Partnership and the Arab Uprisings*, cited above (Note 13), p. 4.

too early to assess how it may include the Mediterranean Partnership on its agenda.⁶⁷

The OSCE as a Source of Inspiration for the Mediterranean World: Wishful Thinking or Realistic Opportunity?

Recent changes and events in the Arab world could give new momentum to the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership. They also raise the question of whether the CSCE/Helsinki process could be used as a model or a source of inspiration for promoting security, democracy, and development in North Africa and the Middle East.

The CSCE/Helsinki process has often been held up as a useful model. As early as 1990, Italy and Spain proposed setting up a meeting inspired by their experiences of the CSCE process.⁶⁸ More than twenty years later, this proposal was reiterated at the International Conference on “The OSCE and a New Context for Regional Cooperation in the Mediterranean” in 2012.⁶⁹

Theoretically, the OSCE’s approach to security is an ideal model for efforts to build security and aid democratization. The Organization’s comparative advantages and expertise could serve as a basis for the establishment of similar structures and mechanisms in the Mediterranean region. In consideration of the regional implications of the changes occurring in some Mediterranean Partners, sharing the OSCE’s expertise in confidence- and security-

67 As already noted, the Mediterranean Partners contributed to the reflections of the previous Panel (see above p. 18 and footnote 60), but the 2005 Eminent Persons devoted very limited attention to this aspect, see *Common Purpose – Towards a More Effective OSCE, Final Report and Recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons On Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE*, 27 June 2005, reprinted in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2005*, Baden-Baden 2006, pp. 359-379, paras 9-11.

68 “In the course of the Meeting, a suggestion was made that, when circumstances allowed, a meeting outside the CSCE could take place that, inspired by experiences of the CSCE process, could discuss a set of generally accepted rules and principles in the fields of stability, co-operation and the human dimension in the Mediterranean.” *Report of the CSCE Meeting on the Mediterranean held in Palma de Mallorca from 24 September to 19 October 1990*, p. 3, at: <http://www.osce.org/ec/16200>.

69 Cf. IPALMO International Conference, *The OSCE and a New Context for Regional Cooperation in the Mediterranean*, Rome, 28 May 2012, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Final Document, p. 6. See also *The OSCE-Mediterranean Partnership and the Arab Uprisings*, cited above (Note 13), p. 7. In 2008, Michael McFaul, professor of political science and Hoover fellow at Stanford University, suggested starting a Helsinki-like process or creating an OSCE-like organization in the Middle East, see Michael McFaul, A Helsinki Process for the Middle East, in: *Democracy* 8/2008, at: <http://www.democracyjournal.org/8/6590.php>. Although McFaul acknowledges that “the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as was the case with the ‘German question’ in Europe, will not be resolved in a multilateral setting”, he stresses that “to promote security, development, and democracy, the Middle East desperately needs its own Helsinki process, including a permanent, multilateral security organization”. See also the report of the international workshop on *OSCE Experience in Promoting Cooperative Security: An Inspiration for the Mediterranean Partners and Beyond?* held in Istanbul on 3-5 March 2005, circulated as PC.DEL/276/05, 8 April 2005.

building measures (CSBMs), which are one of the OSCE's success stories, could contribute to supporting regional co-operation and stability.⁷⁰ Also theoretically, the OSCE, which was initially a process to reduce tensions between East and West, could contribute to creating a more favourable atmosphere in the Mediterranean as a whole, and in the Middle East in particular, by sharing its experience in overcoming the divisions of the past. Through support and encouragement of trans-boundary projects, it could, over the long term, help to build a climate of confidence and security so that the parties involved could focus on technical issues.

Are these ideas realistic and sustainable in 2015, after a year overshadowed by the tragedy in Gaza?

The situation in the Mediterranean area is substantially different from that in post-Soviet Eastern Europe. Although more than 20 years have passed since the collapse of the Soviet empire, and many Eastern European countries are still struggling to emerge from the difficult situations created by the Communist regimes, the Warsaw Pact countries nonetheless shared values with the West derived from a thousand years of common European history. Moreover, the failure of the peace process in the Middle East continues to be a major obstacle to the establishment of permanent co-operation with the countries of the region. "A CSCM [Conference on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean] must succeed and not precede the regional dynamics it seeks to encourage. Its underlying 'co-operative approach' to security does not reflect the more conflictual patterns of relations which exist across the Mediterranean."⁷¹ In particular, the application of arms control and CSBMs in the Euro-Mediterranean region appears highly unrealistic. The absence of a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace precludes parties in the region from applying the progressive CSBMs that have proved effective in the framework of the OSCE. Tangible and substantive progress in the Arab-Israeli negotiations are a pre-condition for the implementation of CSBMs.

Therefore, as Monika Wohlfeld rightly assesses: "From today's perspective, this seems wishful thinking rather than a realistic opportunity."⁷² A mini OSCE-like organization composed of the Mediterranean Partners alone is only ever likely to grow out of co-operation among the states of the region.

70 During the Mediterranean Seminar on "The Security Model for the Twenty-First Century: Implications for the Mediterranean Basin", Cairo, 3-5 September 1997, it was proposed to set up a non-binding CSBM mechanism between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners with a view to enhancing military transparency and contacts in areas such as information exchange, prior notification of certain military activities, annual calendars, and the organization of joint military exercises, see *Proposals on Enhancing the OSCE Mediterranean Dimension gathered by the CPC*, SEC.GAL/57/99/Rev. 1, 15 July 1999, p. 9.

71 Stephen C. Calleya, *Navigating Regional Dynamics in the Post-Cold War World: Patterns of Relations in the Mediterranean Area*, Aldershot 1997, pp. 152-155, quoted by Monika Wohlfeld, *The OSCE and the Mediterranean: Assessment of a Decade of Efforts to Reinvigorate a Dialogue*, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.), OSCE Yearbook 2010, Baden-Baden 2011, pp. 351-368, here: p. 360.

72 Wohlfeld, *ibid.*, p. 360.

Which does not mean that OSCE instruments, such as the 1994 OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, are not highly relevant to the region.

Conclusion

Have recent developments in the Arab world really given new momentum to the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership? The answer to this question is twofold.

On the one hand, the successful institutional transition in Tunisia may reinforce the relevance of the OSCE Partnership with this country. As the first country in the region where a popular uprising brought the regime down, Tunisia was also the first Mediterranean Partner to approach the OSCE with a request for information on the OSCE's experience in assisting democratic transition. This was followed by a visit of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in April 2011, at the invitation of the Tunisian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁷³ Tunisia's recent adoption of a democratic constitution guaranteeing fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, the separation of powers, and the independence of the judiciary, brings hope and sets an example. There and elsewhere, the OSCE can operate as a stimulus for democratization efforts in the region.

On the other hand, the Arab Spring has still to demonstrate that it is "a unique chance to build a brighter future for the entire region".⁷⁴ The anarchy in Libya, which may have major knock-on effects as a result of the uncontrolled dissemination of small arms; the flow of Syrian refugees, which has serious implications for neighbouring Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan;⁷⁵ not to mention the creation of a jihadist Caliphate in Northern Iraq, which is challenging the country's unity and even its very survival: The outcome of three years of turmoil in the Arab world could ultimately raise more problems than it creates benefits for the OSCE region.

In this context, flexibility and operational effectiveness, rather than political ambition, might be the key words for the OSCE's involvement in the Mediterranean region. The Mediterranean Partners have always required more substance in their relationship with the Organization.⁷⁶ Outreach – which means the transmission of OSCE experience in specific realms at the request of Partner States – should govern the Mediterranean dialogue, with a focus on achievable results and practical proposals for co-operation, as

73 The Lithuanian Chair also paid a visit to Cairo in June 2011.

74 Marascalchi/Pavlyuk, cited above (Note 27), here: p. 427.

75 The meeting of the Mediterranean Contact Group on 16 May 2014 was devoted to the impact of refugees on the states neighbouring Syria.

76 "The relationship should be guided by substance. It should focus its efforts on concrete and operational forms of cooperation, to the benefit of both the OSCE participating States and the Partners for Co-operation", *Considerations of the delegations of the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation for the attention of the members of the Panel of Eminent Persons*, cited above (Note 60).

underlined in Switzerland and Serbia's Joint Workplan for 2014 and 2015.⁷⁷ An "à la carte" technical dialogue with the Partners, an option which has been criticized in the past, could at the end of the day become a satisfactory option for both the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners, combined with more involvement in the future of the Organization through the Helsinki +40 Process. What Monika Wohlfeld calls the "devolution" of the Mediterranean Partnership,⁷⁸ i.e. the opportunity for the Partners to enter into dialogue directly with the various parts of the OSCE,⁷⁹ should be encouraged, under the co-ordination of the External Co-operation Section of the OSCE Secretariat.

The 2014 EU presidencies of Greece and Italy offered an opportunity to foster the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and support potential for enhanced co-operation across the Mediterranean. In that regard, the OSCE could provide a fruitful open-dialogue and confidence-building platform to complement the European Union.

Above all, the OSCE participating States should cautiously avoid letting the current security situation in Eastern Europe divert their attention from the Mediterranean. The Ukrainian crisis has indeed highlighted the relevance of the Organization and its capacity to react and to mobilize resources, but, in the long term, it might divert or weaken the interest of the OSCE States from the security challenges in the Mediterranean. As early as 1993, at the CSCE Mediterranean Seminar held in Valletta, "the hope was expressed that the pressures of transition problems in the CSCE area would not divert attention from Mediterranean issues".⁸⁰ Twenty years after the end of the Cold War and the opening of the Iron Curtain, the Arab world is living through its own transition, while the "Old Continent" has not still completely resolved the tensions from the past.

77 "Interaction with the partners should become more concrete and project-oriented", *Joint Workplan of Switzerland and Serbia*, cited above (Note 34), p. 5.

78 Wohlfeld, cited above (Note 71), p. 354.

79 Such as the OCEEA, the Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU), the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, as well as OSCE institutions, particularly ODIHR.

80 Mediterranean Seminar, Valletta, 17-21 May 1993, Chairman's Summary, in: Arie Bloed (ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Basic Documents 1972-1993*, pp. 784-790, here: p. 788.