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Preface

The publication of the second volume of the OSCE Yearbook is taking place at a time when the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is undergoing significant change and facing new kinds of challenges. Thus it is especially worthwhile to have a new collection of knowledgeable articles which provide critical comment on these changes while at the same time offering suggestions and ideas.

The many smouldering conflicts in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia have made conflict prevention the most important practical activity of the OSCE. Very soon after the division of Europe ended, the OSCE created original instruments and methods for reacting to tensions at the earliest possible time. Its international presence can prevent escalation and contribute to peaceful solutions. Conflict prevention is always particularly effective when the underlying tensions do not become manifest and, hence, do not engage the awareness of the public at large.

Half a decade after the end of the Cold War, Europe's security structures have still not been firmly established. International relations and the relevant security organizations are still in transition. One thing has become clear, however: today, security and stability can no longer rest on military factors alone but must also include political, economic and social dimensions. Over the long term, we will only have security and stability in Europe if we succeed in eliminating the causes of tensions not just between countries but also within them - between citizens and their governments or between segments of the population.

I personally regard the establishment of civil societies as one of the most important ways of preventing conflicts at their roots. I am convinced that this will be one of the central tasks of the OSCE in the future. Civil societies are resistant to the new threats, which are growing in significance, such as aggressive nationalism, racism, intolerance and organized crime - threats which jeopardize human rights and cannot be dealt with by the resources of states alone. The problems we encounter are different from one country and region to another. But there is hardly a society which is not somehow affected by these new risks. This is a realm in which the OSCE, with its broad geographic framework of cooperation, can continue to make a significant contribution in the future.