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## Preface

The third edition of the OSCE Yearbook lies firmly in the tradition of research and analytical insight that was established by the first two volumes published in 1995 and 1996 by the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH). Contributions to this Yearbook come from authors who know the Organization from the inside as well as from those on the outside. They provide the reader with a useful overview and analysis of OSCE activities.

The Yearbook is not an official publication of the OSCE but it promotes good relations with the OSCE. It draws on informed sources for its information but retains an objective viewpoint. This leads to a balanced approach which makes it a useful source of information and gives it scholarly value.

The bigger the OSCE's role and operations become, the greater is the need for publications such as this Yearbook which throw light on all aspects of the Organization's work. Since the last edition appeared, for example, the OSCE has been present in Yugoslavia, played an important role in Chechnya, been active in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, just recently, established a presence in Albania. The Lisbon Summit of 1996 was also a significant event, especially with regard to the further development of a Common and Comprehensive Security Model for Europe for the 21st Century. All of these publicly effective operations have been carried out in addition to the many other activities which the OSCE pursues in accordance with its comprehensive view of security. Among the latter are the work of the Chairman-in-Office, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Missions. The reader can inform himself about many of these things in this book.

Europe finds itself in the midst of important changes, particularly with regard to the development of NATO and the European Union. Many analyses of the European security environment fail to take appropriate account of the OSCE's role. This book puts the OSCE at the centre of events.

In this preface - my first for a yearbook of this kind - I wish to offer praise for the efforts of IFSH and of all others who have contributed to the volume. I am convinced that after reading the book the reader will know more about a unique and important organization which, by creating security through co-operation, plays a leading role at this critical point in world history.