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Foreword

"Strengthen the OSCE": this sentence has served as a motto for the present Yearbook. By putting an exclamation mark after it the authors could make it into a call for augmenting their articles with suggestions or proposals for improving the structures and policies of the OSCE. But the same sentence, if followed by a question mark, could also be taken as a critical standard which, when applied to the most recent developments, asks to what extent they are helpful or damaging to efforts to strengthen the OSCE. The state of European security policy and of its institutions permits both options.

The strength of an international organization such as the OSCE can be seen in the quality of the three relationships on which it rests: namely, the relationships to its members, to its field of activity and to other international organizations. These three strands, in turn, are reciprocally related to one another, since the importance that the member states attach to an organization through setting goals, providing personnel and financing, and continuous engagement affects the way it carries out its responsibilities and its relationship to other organizations. And the accomplishments of an organization, for their part, strengthen its reputation with its members and its position with respect to other organizations. Finally, the relationship between the organizations has an impact on their work in the field and on the attitude of the respective governments towards them. Relationships of this kind, which vary a great deal in their character, are neither equally important nor necessarily symmetrical, especially when one views them not as statistical magnitudes but as variables which change over time.

If this model is applied to the recent development of the OSCE, it yields a picture which in the foreground highlights the extraordinary development of the Organization, particularly in connection with its complex operational activities - the missions, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Chairman-in-Office and the Troika - while in the background the equivocal attitudes of governments, along with the OSCE's wavering relationships to the other large European organizations - NATO, the EU and the Council of Europe - can be seen.

No review of the strengths and weaknesses of European institutions and, hence, of the possibilities for making them stronger, can overlook the fact that all efforts of the OSCE and others were in vain and that what had long been threatening in fact occurred: the conflict in Kosovo has turned into a

war. The means for preventing it which the "international community" (in whatever form - United Nations, OSCE, European Union or NATO) used or decreed all proved inadequate. None of these institutions and none of the states that used them or attempted to act on their own were able to prevent the disaster. This is not the place for a discussion of what legally, politically or materially available means ought to have been used, whether they ought to have been used additionally or earlier and, if so, by whom. Rather, we are forced, in passing, to face the unpleasant question of what limits apply to the availability of means for preventing and controlling conflicts. This question, however, cannot be permitted to lead to resignation or international fatalism. On the contrary, the catastrophe in Kosovo should serve as an exhortation to the European countries to strengthen their common institutions - particularly the OSCE. In view of the smouldering conflicts elsewhere on the continent this remains an urgent task.

Still, the attitude of the participating States appears to be one of equivocation, made up partly of constructive and co-operative engagement and partly of unpredictable and indecisive behaviour. It can be seen that, in addition to the fifteen members of the European Union with their Common Foreign and Security Policy, new coalitions of states have taken shape, either *ad hoc* or for a longer term, such as the so-called GUAM group (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova), for example, or the Baltic states. As an expression of the frequently encouraged sub-regionalism, this could lead to a grouping of interests that would promote the formulation of objectives among the 55 participating States and limit the influence of the great powers. Most recently, however, certain states have begun to assert themselves individually, and that, in an organization of countries based on consensus and co-operation, is tantamount to intransigence. For example, the establishment of a Representative on Freedom of the Media, the transfer of police functions to the Mission to Croatia, and progress in discussions of a Platform for Co-operative Security have all proved difficult and the decision on a time and place for the overdue meeting of Heads of State or Government has been put off again and again - in each case because one participating State was opposed.

A meeting of the Heads of State or Government ought to have been held in 1998 in accordance with the 1992 Decisions of Helsinki. There was no final decision because the Turkish government had invited the participating States to meet in Istanbul and Armenia was opposed to it as a meeting place. This resistance was supported by the position of many participating States that made the holding of a Summit contingent on the availability of important documents that would be ripe for decision and have the most favourable possible public effect, pointing in this connection to the slow progress in negotiations on the Platform for Co-operative Security. A pragmatic argument

along these lines seems plausible but is insufficient because it underestimates the value of an institution in enforcing co-operation and overlooks the importance of symbolism in the development of policy, as manifested in a meeting of Heads of State or Government. Moreover, apart from the adoption of a new "big" document, there is enough material in the form of individual issues that burden relations between countries in the area between Vancouver and Vladivostok; the meeting would only have to be appropriately organized to make it useful for clarifying such issues. In this way, the participating States have grievously violated their own agreement on the periodicity of these conferences and missed an opportunity to strengthen the OSCE.

In contrast to this obvious lack of understanding for the dignity of institutions and for symbolism in policy-making, there has been a series of operational decisions which certainly do strengthen the OSCE. The transfer of police responsibilities to the Mission to Croatia and the establishment of the office of OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media deserve particular mention. Both of these decisions entail a significant enrichment of OSCE responsibilities. The creation of the position of Co-ordinator within the Secretariat of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, as well, demonstrates the willingness of the OSCE participating States to become more deeply involved in a delicate area - i.e. the relationship between security, economic activity and the environment. Another development worthy of attention is the establishment of offices in a number of Central Asian countries which see their ties to the countries of Western Europe strengthened through the OSCE. Fears expressed in the last Yearbook to the effect that new institutions related to NATO such as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the Permanent Joint Council between NATO and Russia would undermine the OSCE have so far not turned out to be justified.

The OSCE and the Council of Europe have gradually begun to develop a co-operative relationship in various fields, although the Netherlands government's initiative for an Alliance for Human Rights and Democracy between the two organizations went beyond the practical possibilities of the moment.

To strengthen the OSCE: the vast majority of the representatives in the Parliamentary Assembly have committed themselves to this objective. The parliamentarians' personal commitment has been evident from their frequent appearances as election observers. What their decisions over the last few years and, most recently, at their week-long meeting in Copenhagen have done to strengthen the OSCE, is deserving of greater attention. They consist of recommendations and calls to the governments, which retain the responsibility for action, for improving the structures and the operations of the OSCE.

In sum, one can say with regard to the recent development of the relationships mentioned at the beginning of this article, on which the strength of the

OSCE depends, that their quality has increased. The problems in the field of security policy have not, to be sure, become any smaller. The editorial staff thank all of the authors who in the pages that follow have contributed to an insight into this dilemma.