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The Mediterranean Security Dimension¹

OSCE's Relations with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation

Necessity for an Acknowledged Relationship

From the beginning of the Helsinki process, a number of countries on the Southern rim of the Mediterranean pioneered a special relationship with the OSCE based on the link between European security and that of the Mediterranean region. The geographical proximity, as well as the OSCE countries' historical, cultural, economic and political ties with Mediterranean countries, led to the inclusion of a chapter on "Questions Relating to Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean" in the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. In signing the Final Act, Heads of State or Government endorsed that

"security in Europe is to be considered in the broader context of world security and is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean area as a whole, and that accordingly the process of improving security should not be confined to Europe but should extend to other parts of the world, and in particular to the Mediterranean area".²

Since then, the intertwining of security in Europe and the Mediterranean region has been underscored time and again in subsequent CSCE/OSCE documents, as well as in seminars and meetings which have addressed the Mediterranean dimension of security. The substance of that relationship is emerging only slowly, however.

This article first briefly discusses the composition of the group of the Southern Mediterranean countries involved in the dialogue with the OSCE. It then provides a list of some proposals aimed at deepening the Mediterranean dimension of the OSCE, suggested by participating States or Mediterranean countries. It continues with a discussion of the history of the strengthening of relations, including the creation of the Contact Group with Mediterranean partners, Mediterranean OSCE seminars, and finally, operational issues. The discussion of the Mediterranean dimension in the framework of the prepara-

1 The views expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the OSCE.

2 Final Act of Helsinki, Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Helsinki, 1 August 1975, in: Arie Bloed (Ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation. Analysis and Basic Documents, 1972-1993*, Dordrecht/Boston/London 1993, pp. 141-217, here: p. 182.

tion of the Security Model (Document-Charter for the twenty-first century), to be adopted at the Istanbul Summit in November 1999, concludes this paper.

The Mediterranean Security Dimension: Participating Countries

The OSCE co-operates with six Mediterranean partners: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia and - since May 1998 - also Jordan.

It was Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia, who requested a closer association with the activities of the CSCE during the 1993 Rome Ministerial Council. A more structured relationship was then offered to these five Mediterranean countries, earlier referred to as non-participating Mediterranean States (NPMS), with a decision of the Committee of Senior Officials (25th CSO meeting, March 1994, Prague). A new designation - "Mediterranean partners for co-operation" (MPCs) - was adopted with a Permanent Council decision in December 1995.

In 1994, a year in which the Mediterranean security dimension attracted much attention, the Foreign Minister of Israel, Shimon Peres, made a proposal to extend the OSCE dialogue to Jordan and the Palestinians. The Permanent Representative of Italy to the OSCE, Mario Sica, wrote in 1995 that "it is also conceivable that in the future the dialogue may extend to Jordan and the Palestinians, as proposed by Israel (...) and, depending on developments in the Middle East, to other states as well".³

In fact, four years later, Jordan sought status as an MPC. In May 1998, a PC decision welcomed Jordan as an MPC, after the country requested that status. Due to recent developments in the Middle East peace process it may well be that other states will come forward to express their interest in becoming OSCE's Mediterranean partners for co-operation.

At times, reference has also been made to "security in adjacent areas", which includes the Mediterranean dimension, and relations with the Mediterranean partners for co-operation, the partners for co-operation (Japan and Korea), and other non-participating States. The reference to "adjacent areas" is to be found as early as in the report of the Meeting of Experts on the possibilities and means of promoting concrete initiatives for mutually beneficial co-operation concerning various economic, scientific and cultural fields in Valletta in 1979.

The MPCs are not a homogeneous regional group. However, occasionally they present joint approaches. For example, during the review conference be-

3 Mario Sica, *The New Mediterranean Dimension of the OSCE*, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (Ed.), *OSCE-Yearbook 1995/1996*, Baden-Baden 1997, pp. 379-383, here: p. 383.

fore the 1996 Lisbon Summit, the five Mediterranean partners did speak with one voice. They presented a proposal for the MPCs to be invited to attend OSCE meetings such as those of the Permanent Council, the Forum for Security Co-operation and the Security Model Committee. This proposal was not implemented due to a lack of consensus on the matter. OSCE participating States have occasionally reiterated their encouragement to the MPCs to make joint contributions and to develop common positions on issues of interest - but so far without much success. The apparent inability to speak as a group weakens the position of the MPCs when lobbying for closer relations with the OSCE. Of course, asking for joint positions implies that participating States assume the notion of a homogeneous international region where, however, such patterns of interaction do not (yet) exist. In particular, the ups and downs of the Middle East peace process have had an impact on the interaction of the countries of the Mediterranean. Egypt, for example, stated recently in a paper distributed to participating States that "tangible and substantive progress (...) in all tracks of the Arab-Israeli negotiations" is a precondition for the implementation of CSBMs.⁴ It may be argued that in view of the political process underway in Israel, prospects of progress in OSCE-Mediterranean relations may have become more realistic.

Proposals

Over the years, many suggestions have been made in different contexts by a number of different states, including the MPCs themselves, on how to develop the OSCE's relations with the Mediterranean States. In fact, since the European Union countries have formed a caucus in the OSCE and speak with one voice, proposals are put forward mostly by the EU as a whole or by Malta. Some countries are opposed to any further institutionalization within the framework of the OSCE and are concerned about overloading the very busy agenda of the OSCE and overburdening its resources. A number of participating States also underline that the OSCE's dialogue with the MPCs should not interfere with the activities of other existing structures such as the Barcelona process. Given the fact that not all participating States are fully supportive of the various proposals, the failure described above of MPCs to act jointly vis-à-vis the OSCE, and thus not being clear about their priorities, further diminishes the chances of implementing these proposals.

The list below is an attempt to summarize the main proposals tabled on cooperation of the Organization with MPCs. The purpose of this list is not to give a full catalogue of ideas, but rather to point to the wealth of approaches and concepts that characterize the internal debate on the future direction of

4 Egypt, PC. DEL/380/98, 4 September 1998.

the Mediterranean dimension in the OSCE. Many of the following concepts have been tabled several times on different occasions (at meetings of the Contact Group, Mediterranean seminars, and others). Some have found their way onto the agenda, and some have been adopted. Others may simply have been unrealistic, given the link to the political situation in the Middle East.

A number of proposals pertain to information systems. In particular, the creation of an information system MEDGATE has been proposed to disseminate information and knowledge related to the OSCE process of setting norms and standards to the Mediterranean partners.

Another set of proposals relates to the status of the MPCs. *Inter alia*, intensification of dialogue in the Permanent Council, including full access to plenary meetings of the Permanent Council, the Forum for Security Co-operation, and the Security Model Committee; formalization of the informal open-ended Contact Group; and creation of an observer status in the OSCE for MPCs have been requested.

An issue of specific interest to MPCs are anti-terrorism measures. In this area, in which the OSCE does not have much experience, the development of a model anti-terrorism convention has been proposed that could be adopted by OSCE participating States and MPCs; to hold special Forum for Security Co-operation meetings on terrorism with MPCs; to create a database on terrorism accessible to MPCs; and to introduce preventive measures to detect links between organized crime, drug trafficking, and terrorism groups.

For the economic and environmental dimension, past proposals range from widening the scope of the Economic Forum to include topics related to migration, environment, science and technology and food security; to the implementation of economic dimension commitments regarding enhanced cooperation with the Mediterranean region; exchanging information on environmental policies and programmes; and establishing a consolidated database on environmental policies and programmes, particularly in the Mediterranean. In fact, the 1999 Economic Forum, to which all MPCs were invited (though not all attended), focused on environmental issues.

A realm of interest to the MPCs are confidence-building measures (CBMs) relevant to the human dimension (cultural CBMs, including setting up information systems and databases, and CBMs in the field of religion, aimed at presenting undistorted images of religions to the general public). While the human dimension has been part of the CSCE/OSCE since its inception and religious and cultural diversity and tolerance is a hallmark of the OSCE, some of these CBMs proposed by MPCs go beyond the OSCE's expertise or field of activity.

Although it is recognized that traditional CBMs and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) cannot be currently implemented in the

Mediterranean region,⁵ it is thought that the OSCE may be a source of inspiration⁶ and offer a model for similar approaches to be taken in the region in the realm of transparency, confidence-building measures, and CSBMs.

Both the OSCE participating States and MPCs must decide whether, in the absence of viable prospects for introducing traditional CBMs in the Southern Mediterranean region, a focus on CBMs in the human dimension could be a basis for ultimately developing CBMs which fit the comprehensive concept of OSCE security.

A promising area of the OSCE Mediterranean dialogue pertains to OSCE operational work: visits of MPCs to missions, participation in OSCE/ODIHR election observation and monitoring, and, perhaps in the future, appointing staff to OSCE institutions and missions. The first two proposals have already been implemented; the latter is currently under discussion.

The establishment of structures in the Mediterranean analogous to those of the OSCE has been proposed utilizing OSCE expertise in order to establish structures for conflict prevention, early warning, preventive diplomacy as well as other activities and mechanisms. In this context, the following points were raised: transfer of OSCE expertise in internal stabilization, *inter alia*, in the field of elections and the development of legal systems; regional round tables based on the experience of the Stability Pact; a Stability Pact for the Mediterranean; development of a Conflict Prevention Centre for the Mediterranean region (with close co-operation with the OSCE CPC as a first step); as well as a Conference on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean (CSCM).

The most ambitious proposal for a CSCM based on the CSCE model deserves special attention. During a 1990 CSCE meeting in Palma de Mallorca this proposal was developed by the so-called "4+5 Group", consisting of four Southern European EC member states (France, Italy, Spain and Portugal) and the five participants of the Arab Maghreb Union (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia) with Malta as an observer.

Due to a lack of consensus, a non-binding open-ended report was issued, declaring that a meeting outside the CSCE process could discuss a set of generally accepted rules and principles in the fields of stability, co-operation and

5 Tanner wrote that "given the multi-level threat scenarios, combined with sub-regional military rivalries and the continuous militarization of the region, the application of classic arms control and militarily significant CSBMs in the Euro-Mediterranean region appears extremely urgent, but also highly unrealistic at this point in time". Fred Tanner, *The Euro-Med Partnership: Prospects for Arms Limitations and Confidence Building after Malta*, in: *The International Spectator* 2/1997, p. 9. Regional players indicate that "the absence of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace (...) precludes parties in the region from applying the progressive CBMs that have proved effective in the framework of the OSCE". Statement by Amre Moussa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt, December 1997.

6 OSCE Mediterranean Seminar on the OSCE Experience in the Field of Confidence-Building, Cairo 1995.

the human dimension in the Mediterranean when circumstances in the area permitted. A prominent expert on regional issues in the Mediterranean provided an assessment of the initiative:

"The CSCM proposal thus attempted to institutionalise concepts associated with the notion of a comprehensive international region where such patterns of interaction did not exist. As a result it can be described as a premature initiative (...) (A) CSCM 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."⁷

But the CSCM concept is not buried yet. The summary of a 1997 OSCE seminar states that the "idea of convening a CSCM should not be shelved for good: a CSCM could play a co-ordinating role with respect to other initiatives such as the Barcelona Process and the Mediterranean Forum".⁸

Structuring Relations

Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia had made contributions and statements at the second stage of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. In the follow-up meetings after Helsinki 1975 the Mediterranean States were invited to make contributions. A series of specific meetings were held on Mediterranean issues mostly relating to the economic, environmental, scientific, and cultural fields, in which the Mediterranean States were invited to participate (Valletta, 1978; Venice, 1984; Palma de Mallorca, 1990; and Valletta, 1993). During the second OSCE Summit in 1990, in the Charter of Paris, the participating States maintained that they "will continue efforts to strengthen security and co-operation in the Mediterranean as an important factor for stability in Europe".⁹ The 1992 Helsinki Summit Document states that the "non-participating Mediterranean States will continue to be invited to contribute to CSCE activities".¹⁰

In 1994, following a request by the five Mediterranean countries for closer association with the activities of the CSCE, they were offered a structured

7 Stephen C. Calleya, *Navigating Regional Dynamics in the Post-Cold War World: Patterns of Relations in the Mediterranean Area*, Aldershot 1997, pp. 152-155.

8 Consolidated Summary, OSCE Mediterranean Seminar on the Security Model for the Twenty-First Century: Implications for the Mediterranean Basin, 3-5 September 1997, Cairo, p. 8.

9 Charter of Paris for a New Europe, Paris, 21 November 1990, in Bloed (Ed.), cited above (Note 2), pp. 537-566, here: p. 547.

10 CSCE Helsinki Document 1992: The Challenges of Change, Helsinki, 10 July 1992, in: Bloed (Ed.), cited above (Note 2), pp. 701-777, here: p. 731.

relationship. Consequently, they were invited to a series of CSCE/OSCE meetings (meetings of the Ministerial Council, review conferences, regular meetings with the OSCE Troika, that is the representatives of the previous, current and forthcoming Chairman-in-Office, and, on a case-by-case basis, to seminars and other *ad hoc* meetings on subjects of special interest). They were also given access to all CSCE documents and the right to submit their views to the Chairman-in-Office.

Contact Group

The association was further deepened at the 1994 Budapest Summit, where it was decided, among other things, that an informal, open-ended Contact Group at the level of experts would be established within the framework of the Permanent Council in Vienna "in order to facilitate the interchange of information of mutual interest and the generation of ideas".¹¹ This new framework for co-operation was designated for the organization of Mediterranean seminars on topics of mutual interest and high-level consultations between the OSCE - represented by the Troika and the Secretary General - and the MPCs.

Though the meetings of the Contact Group with the Mediterranean partners are informal, a number of participating States, including the MPCs, are represented at ambassadorial level. All six MPCs regularly attend the meetings of the Contact Group, which take place several times per year. It is up to individual countries to signal their interest in joining the discussions of the Contact Group with the MPCs as well as in attending other meetings they may be invited to.

The Contact Group with the MPCs mainly provides an exchange of information and discussion on issues of mutual interest between the MPCs and the OSCE participating States. The agenda includes a briefing by a representative of the Chairman-in-Office who presents information on the most recent events, in particular OSCE missions and field activities. This is usually followed by a presentation on one of the main aspects of the OSCE activities by an OSCE official, such as the Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, or a Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office.

The Contact Group meeting with the MPCs is the main framework for dialogue but occurs relatively infrequently and lacks a strategic concept for the promotion of effective interchange. This, combined with the fact that a number of the MPCs proposals for closer association with the OSCE have so far

11 Budapest Document 1994, Budapest, 6 December 1994, in: Arie Bloed (Ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Basic Documents, 1993-1995*, The Hague/London/Boston 1997, pp. 145-189, here: p. 188.

not been developed, contributes, in turn, to a certain frustration on the part of the MPCs, occasionally interpreted by participating States as disinterest. Perhaps, one might even refer to this phenomenon as a vicious circle. Further reflection is required in order to facilitate the development of the OSCE-MPC dialogue.

Seminars

Mediterranean seminars provide for a large part of the ongoing Mediterranean dialogue by focusing on specific issues. The seminars are usually attended by high-level representatives from the Mediterranean partners for co-operation, participating States, international organizations, as well as by academics and NGOs. The seminars provide the opportunity to devote time to exchanging views, recapitulating ideas and suggestions made, and possibly to contributing to further developments in the OSCE-MPC relationship - but they have yielded little in terms of solid visible results or follow-ups.

The most recent seminar was held in 1998 in Malta on "The Human Dimension of Security, Promoting Democracy and the Rule of Law". Jordan will be hosting the 1999 OSCE Mediterranean seminar on "Implementing the Human Dimension". As a newcomer, Jordan has offered to host the next Mediterranean seminar in December 1999, showing an active interest in the OSCE-MPC dialogue.

Operational Developments

In June 1998, the OSCE Permanent Council adopted a decision permitting representatives of the MPCs to perform part of OSCE/ODIHR election monitoring and supervision operations, on a case-by-case basis, and to make short-term visits to the OSCE missions in order to continue to gain understanding of OSCE know-how.¹² The MPCs have been encouraged to take advantage of this decision by participating actively in this process and by keeping themselves informed first hand about OSCE field experience.

The decision was based on an EU proposal tabled during a Contact Group meeting that underscored the importance of the Mediterranean partners taking advantage of the OSCE field experience. The proposal hinged upon the assumption that through visits to the missions and participation in election observation, the MPCs could take advantage of OSCE past experience and witness the comprehensive approach to security in the field. The Permanent Council decision states that in "the light of the continued interest shown by

12 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Permanent Council, 172nd Plenary Meeting, PC Journal No. 172, Agenda item 7, Decision No. 233, PC.Dec/233, 11 June 1998.

the Mediterranean partners in becoming better acquainted with OSCE activities and the desire of participating States to improve the quality of the interaction between the Mediterranean partners for co-operation and the work of the Organization"¹³ representatives of the MPCs may embark on short-term visits to OSCE missions as well as participate in OSCE/ODIHR election monitoring or supervision operations.

In the following year, during May 1999, when the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina organized a workshop in Sarajevo to which MPCs were invited, the MPCs took advantage of the opportunity to visit a mission for the first time. Through lectures on specific issues, Mission experts provided insight into the field work being carried out by the OSCE in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the areas: elections, democratization, human rights and regional stabilization. A visit to the field office in Travnik, Central Bosnia Canton, was also organized. Apart from representatives from various participating States, almost all the Mediterranean partners for co-operation took part. The MPC delegations have since expressed their interest in visiting other missions of the OSCE.

In response to an invitation to participate in election monitoring, an Egyptian representative let it be known that when election monitoring takes place in an OSCE participating State, Egyptian representatives have been instructed to supervise in those states where Egypt has diplomatic representation. Up to now, some of the MPCs have participated in election-monitoring activities organized by the ODIHR in the OSCE region.

By taking advantage of both the opportunities to visit OSCE missions and participate in election supervision and monitoring, the MPCs demonstrate their interest in exploring how the OSCE functions and contribute to OSCE activities - thus bringing into the relationship an element of reciprocity.

The Security Model

Currently, the MPCs' attention is focused on the so-called Security Model. During the Budapest Summit held in 1994 the OSCE participating States decided to prepare a Common and Comprehensive Security Model for Europe for the 21st century whose goal it will be to create a "common security space free of dividing lines in which all States are equal partners". The Security Model debate is to culminate in the adoption of a Document-Charter at the OSCE Summit in Istanbul in November 1999. It is envisaged that this will be a comprehensive political document, evaluating European security at the macro-political level.

13 Ibid.

From the beginning of the discussions on the Security Model, the Mediterranean partners expressed their interest in participating actively. Although they repeatedly had the opportunity to follow and occasionally also discuss the Security Model in a number of fora (seminars,¹⁴ Contact Group), it was not until early 1999 that they were invited to participate in one of the meetings of the main framework for negotiations, the Security Model Committee.

The Chairman of the Contact Group with the Mediterranean partners (in 1996, Switzerland) reported on contributions to the Security Model at the 1996 Lisbon Summit. Under priority areas it was stated that concrete measures would be explored in areas where the OSCE had acquired specific expertise and where it could share its experience with its Mediterranean partners. The areas mentioned pertained to the development of CSBMs, preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, human rights and other items from the list of risks and challenges. It was also stated that "issues related to terrorism, social and economic disparities, and cultural and religious misconceptions meet with wide interest".¹⁵

The discussions of participating States with the MPCs in the Contact Group and seminars culminated in the inclusion of the Mediterranean dimension in the decisions adopted at the 1997 Copenhagen Ministerial Council. The Guidelines on an OSCE Document-Charter on European Security state that

"(r)ecognizing the indivisibility of security, they (the participating States) affirm that strengthened security and co-operation in adjacent areas, in particular the Mediterranean, is an important factor for stability in the OSCE area. They will consider ways of closer co-operation with all partners for co-operation in order to promote the norms and values shared by the OSCE participating States. They will also encourage partners to draw on OSCE expertise."¹⁶

During the 1998 OSCE Ministerial Council in Oslo, the Troika met at the ministerial level with the Mediterranean partners for co-operation. The latter expressed their desire to contribute to the shaping and drafting of any section on the Mediterranean dimension of the Charter on European Security. They expressed their interest in drawing on OSCE expertise in tackling threats to their own regional security.¹⁷ They have however also expressed some disap-

14 For example, the 1997 Cairo seminar was entirely devoted to "The Security Model for the Twenty-first Century: Implications for the Mediterranean Basin".

15 The Security Model Discussion 1995-1996. Report of the Chairman-in-Office to the Lisbon Summit, Lisbon, 30 November 1996.

16 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Sixth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, Copenhagen, 18-19 December 1997, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (Ed.), OSCE Yearbook 1998, Baden-Baden 1999, pp. 431-457, here: p. 448.

17 Cf. Press release, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, 1 December 1998.

pointment with the process. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt indicated that,

"since the Budapest Summit in 1994, various OSCE conferences have called for an increased participation of the Mediterranean partner countries in the Mediterranean dimension of the Security Model (...) Egypt has therefore strongly called for the urgent implementation of the Budapest and Lisbon Summit resolutions, granting the MPCs the accessibility to various instances in the Organization in matters relating to the Mediterranean dimension of the Security Model. Unfortunately, till today, we have not seen tangible process on this quintessential step."¹⁸

He went on to say that while he understands why the process of developing the Security Model is slow, MPCs should be able to contribute to shaping this process in its formative stage.

At the beginning of 1999, the Mediterranean partners, together with the other partners for co-operation, Japan and Korea, were invited for the first time to participate in the relevant meeting of the Security Model Committee on "Security and Co-operation in Adjacent Areas - Co-operation with Partners for Co-operation".

During the writing of this article, discussions on the final draft of the Document-Charter and of its components were still in process.

Conclusion

Two routes form the point of departure within the Mediterranean dimension of the OSCE: the development of the OSCE's *acquis communautaire*, especially the progress on the Document-Charter; and the peace process in the Middle East, which defines not only the composition of the group of Southern Mediterranean countries participating in the dimension, but also their coherence as a group or region.

Political developments in Israel are an encouragement to those who believe that the time has come to develop a regional approach to the Southern Mediterranean, to transfer knowledge from the OSCE, and develop OSCE-like approaches and structures in the region. It remains to be seen whether the hoped-for revival of the peace process in the Middle East will take place, and to what degree, and at what speed the Southern Mediterranean States will respond by approaching the OSCE as a region.

18 Speech by H.E. Mr Amre Moussa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Seventh OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting, Oslo, 2-3 December 1998.

Likewise, the development of the Document-Charter provides a real opportunity to redefine the operational base of the OSCE-MPC relationship. Here, as well, it remains to be seen which elements from the array of proposals on strengthening this relationship will find their way into the Document to be adopted later this year in Istanbul.

One thing is clear: the MPCs are eager to expand their relationship with the OSCE. At the Oslo Ministerial in 1998, for example, Morocco underscored the need "to legitimate the MPCs' status and to reinforce links with OSCE, and to render the OSCE decision-making mechanism more transparent, through active MPC participation in a 'Security Model for the 21st Century', participation in the OSCE missions, in the observation of elections in the common OSCE-MPC region, and the practical implementation of mutual confidence-building measures and preventive diplomacy for the resolution of crisis situations".¹⁹ Other MPCs advocate a similar approach. The latter does not appear all that unrealistic any more.

19 Morocco, MC. DEL/59/98, Oslo Ministerial Council Meeting, 3 December 1998.