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More than Counting Ceasefire Violations – the Human Dimension within the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine

Introduction

In November 2014, half a decade had passed since protests broke out in Independence Square in Kyiv, which led to a violent response by law enforcement institutions under the command of President Viktor Yanukovich, and finally his resignation in February 2014. In the aftermath of these events, Crimea was annexed by Russia and pro-Russian armed groups seized public buildings in Donbas. Eventually, the Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics ("LPR" and "DPR") were proclaimed in April 2014.

Against this background, in March 2014 the OSCE Permanent Council (PC) Decision No. 1117 tasked the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) with monitoring the security situation, aiming to reduce tensions and foster peace, stability, and security. According to its mandate, the SMM should also "monitor and support respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms". Since then, international monitors (more than 700 deployed in May 2018) continue to operate in the whole of Ukraine, with the predominant focus on reporting ceasefire violations in Donbas.¹

This article describes the SMM's work in the human dimension and analyses the challenges to the full implementation of its mandate in this area. It particularly focuses on the work of the SMM in eastern Ukraine, acknowledging that eight SMM teams work in other parts of Ukraine. Taking into consideration the sensitivity of certain issues and the "do no harm" principle, this article deliberately does not address the issues of torture, gender-based violence, and missing persons.

The OSCE and the Human Dimension

Although the OSCE was created as a security organization, it is based on a broad concept of security. The Helsinki Final Act acknowledges as one of its ten guiding principles the "respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief". For the first

Note: Lukasz Mackiewicz worked with the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission between January 2016 and May 2017. All opinions expressed in this article are his own.

1 Cf. OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), Status Report, 2 May 2018, at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/379768>.

time, human rights principles were included as an explicit and integral element of a regional security framework. This acknowledgement has been reinforced by numerous follow-up documents. In OSCE terminology, the term “human dimension” is therefore used to describe the set of norms and activities related to human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, which is regarded within the OSCE as one of three dimensions of security, together with the politico-military, and the economic and environmental dimensions.² Consequently, security is more than merely the absence of war. A fundamental aspect of the OSCE’s human dimension is that human rights and pluralistic democracy are not considered the internal affairs of a state. In fact, in the Moscow Document from 1991, the participating States “categorically and irrevocably” declared that the “commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the CSCE [now: OSCE] are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned”. Consequently, the OSCE is not only a community of values but also a community of responsibility.

Key Human Dimension Issues in Ukraine

The outbreak of a violent conflict in eastern Ukraine in spring 2014 has so far resulted in over 10,000 deaths, including 2,500 civilians, and the displacement of more than 1.6 million people.³ Although heavy fighting has decreased and the 457-kilometre “contact line” has not moved much since the signing of the Minsk Agreement in February 2015, the conflict is still “far from frozen.”⁴ According to the United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) up to 4.4 million people have been directly affected by the continuing hostilities, while 3.4 million needed urgent assistance in 2017.⁵

In 2017, the SMM reported more than 400,000 ceasefire violations.⁶ As OCHA points out, 60 per cent of the people living along the contact line are regularly affected by shelling, and almost 40 per cent every day.⁷ Consequently, heavy weapons and mines remain the primary cause of civilian casualties and contributed to the death and injury of more than 400 civilians in 2017.⁸

2 Cf. OSCE ODIHR, OSCE Human Dimension Commitments, Volume 1, Thematic Compilation, 3rd Edition, Warsaw 2011.

3 Cf. UN OCHA, 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan, Ukraine, January-December 2018, Ukraine, December 2017, at: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/ukraine_humanitarian_response_plan_2018.pdf.

4 Chase Winter, Interview: Ukraine conflict on the brink, *Deutsche Welle*, 12 November 2016, at: <https://www.dw.com/en/interview-ukraine-conflict-on-the-brink/a-36740409>.

5 Cf. UN OCHA, 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan, cited above (Note 3), p. 5.

6 Cf. OSCE observers record over 400,000 ceasefire breaches in Donbas in 2017, *Interfax-Ukraine*, 15 February 2018, at: <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/485431.html>.

7 Cf. UN OCHA, 2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview, Ukraine, November 2017.

8 Cf. Another winter for war-torn eastern Ukraine, *euronews*, 7 December 2017, at: <https://www.euronews.com/2017/12/07/another-winter-for-war-torn-eastern-ukraine>.

As the violation of the right to life is a fundamental human rights violation, reporting civilian casualties remains a human dimension priority for the SMM. On a daily basis, SMM monitors talk to the victims and witnesses, and visit hospitals and morgues in order to verify the reports regarding wounded and killed civilians. In addition to information about civilian casualties in the SMM Daily Reports, in 2017 the SMM published its first thematic report on “Civilian Casualties in Eastern Ukraine 2016”, where it confirmed 442 civilian casualties (88 killed, 354 injured) in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in 2016, as well as the use of heavy weapons proscribed by the Minsk agreements. The scrupulous corroboration of each case is crucial for reporting facts on the ground, as media outlets on both sides regularly report civilian casualties that never occurred. In this regard, the SMM’s freedom of movement, also in the non-government controlled area, remains a prerequisite for their reporting, particularly as other international organizations, such as the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), lack the access. However, since autumn 2015 the SMM has not been able to conduct regular visits to hospitals and morgues in the “DPR” and “LPR”.

In addition to monitoring cases of civilian casualties, the SMM is closely involved in monitoring and advocating freedom of movement for civilians across the contact line. Every month, over one million people are forced to cross the “no-man’s land” through checkpoints, many to access basic humanitarian and social services.⁹ The SMM monitors are often present in the vicinity of the checkpoints from the early morning when the checkpoints open, until late evening when they are closed, in order to ensure the ceasefire and safe passage of civilians. However, they experience regular harassment from military personnel at the checkpoints and accusations of “doing nothing” from the frustrated people queuing for hours and trying to cross to the other side. Even though they are not intended to be “human shields”, many SMM monitors endanger their lives by staying longer at these hotspots than they should. In addition to monitoring the security situation at the entry/exit points daily, the SMM also facilitates dialogue between the conflicting sides in order to open new checkpoints, to normalize the procedures for crossing, and to improve the facilities at the checkpoints.

However, the suffering in eastern Ukraine is not only related to casualties and restrictions of movement. A whole range of violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law affect the population. In its 2017 “Hardship for conflict-affected civilians in Eastern Ukraine” report, the SMM pointed out several instances when both sides continued to establish military posts in populated areas. The SMM has regularly reported and advocated cases to the military hierarchy where residents have complained of being harassed by members

9 Cf. United Nations Office for a the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Four Years of Conflict in Ukraine leave 4.4 million people in a dire humanitarian situation*, New York, 20 April 2018.

of both sides or made allegations about their misconduct while under the influence of alcohol and their bad behaviour towards the local population. The two sides have also imposed *ad hoc* restrictions that affect civilians' access to their properties. Furthermore, the presence of armed formations in populated areas is often accompanied by the occupation of public buildings. In the run up to 1 September 2016 and the beginning of the new school year, the SMM Daily Reports underlined the military presence in close proximity to schools and kindergartens in order to advocate this issue and improve children's safety and security. Finally, as the clashes continue for the fifth year, much of the crucial infrastructure (water pipes, electricity grids) close to the contact line has been damaged. In 2017 alone, the SMM conducted 715 so-called "mirror patrols" in order to facilitate the repair and maintenance of infrastructure along the contact line.¹⁰ Mirror patrols mean that the SMM conducts simultaneous patrols on both sides of the contact line to monitor a temporary cessation of hostilities, for an agreed "window of silence". For instance, as the Karbonit-Pervomaisk pipeline had been damaged by shelling, in January 2017 the SMM facilitated a window of silence so that repair crews could fix a water pipeline supplying more than 200,000 residents in the Luhansk region.¹¹

However, the SMM does not only cover human dimension issues in eastern Ukraine. Out of the ten teams, eight operate in other parts of Ukraine and closely follow developments there. One of the most important aspects is conflict-related displacement. Since 2014, thousands of people have had to leave their homes and seek refuge elsewhere. Two primary factors caused the displacement: firstly, the annexation of Crimea and secondly, the "proclamation of independence" by the "DPR" and "LPR" as well as the intensification of hostilities in eastern Ukraine in mid-2014. On 23rd April 2018, the Ukraine Ministry of Social Policy reported 1.5 million officially registered internally displaced persons (IDPs) from temporarily occupied Crimea and Donbas. In August 2014, the SMM published its first thematic report on internal displacement in Ukraine. Two years later, the SMM monitors spoke to more than 1,600 IDPs and members of host communities across the country in order to assess the impact of the ongoing conflict and long-term displacement on IDPs and their relations with host communities. In its 2016 report "Conflict-related Displacement in Ukraine: Increased Vulnerabilities of Affected Populations and Triggers of Tension within Communities" the SMM underlined that while the findings are not a complete assessment of the IDPs' situation in Ukraine, "many IDPs continue to be exposed to severe hardship and suffer from the protracted displacement".

10 Cf. 2017 SMM, activities in figures, at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/368246>.

11 OSCE, OSCE mirror patrols: Windows of hope in Eastern Ukraine, 12 April 2017, at: <https://www.osce.org/stories/osce-mirror-patrols-windows-of-hope-eastern-ukraine>.

As the SMM monitors face all manner of human dimension issues on a daily basis and often do not have a specific human rights background, the Mission rather gives a general overview of the situation in the field. However, there are many well established organizations and NGOs in Donbas that specialize in specific, often narrow, topics such as the legislation regarding pensions and property (e.g. Norwegian Refugee Council), assistance for internally displaced populations (e.g. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR) or economic recovery (United Nation Development Programme, UNDP). The SMM co-operates with all these actors. The Human Dimension Unit staff work particularly closely with the OHCHR and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with regards to the corroboration of civilian casualties, issues related to freedom of movement across the contact line, and specific cases of human rights violations. In the “LPR” and “DPR”, where the UN organizations often have only limited access and freedom of movement, the SMM plays an important role in reporting the situation on the ground. Furthermore, civilians regularly approach the SMM monitors requesting humanitarian assistance. In such situations, the SMM passes on the requests to the respective organizations as it does not itself have any capacity to provide humanitarian assistance.

Reaching Its Full Potential

While underlining many achievements, former SMM staff stressed in interviews that the SMM has not so far reached its full potential concerning its work on human dimension issues. There are several reasons for this that can be clustered around three central issues: *first*, lack of strategic orientation, *second*, internal operational challenges, and *third*, external operational challenges.

Lack of Strategic Orientation

On 21st March 2014, the OSCE Permanent Council resolved to establish a monitoring mission to Ukraine, initially composed of 100 civilian monitors throughout the country, to contribute to reducing tensions and fostering peace, stability, and security. The SMM would also “monitor and support respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities” and “facilitate the dialogue on the ground in order to reduce tensions and promote normalization of the situation”.

In the aftermath of the escalation of the conflict in summer 2014, the Minsk Protocol was signed on 5 September and complemented on 19 September 2014 by a Memorandum. In effect, the SMM, a civilian mission, was tasked with monitoring the ceasefire and verifying the withdrawal of weapon systems and armed formations, a typical task for military peacekeeping missions. As pointed out in 2014 by Claus Neukirch, the SMM’s new tasks were

to be implemented in parallel with its other core activities stated in the mandate.¹² Taking into consideration ongoing heavy fighting along the contact line, the SMM focused heavily on the politico-military aspects of the conflict and, in particular, on monitoring the ceasefire regime and reporting on violations. The SMM's key role in monitoring and verifying the ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons was further emphasized in the "Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements".¹³ As clearly reflected in the SMM Daily Reports, this prioritization was achieved by improving the SMM's technological capacity to monitor the situation (e.g. use of drones, installation of cameras, video analysis capacity), and most importantly, in setting daily priorities for teams operating along the contact line.

The OSCE Permanent Council has regularly demonstrated an interest in the human dimension issues in Donbas.¹⁴ On several occasions, the Permanent Council's Human Dimension Committee invited the SMM to present its findings. However, this has not resulted in a clear programmatic approach or strategy. Some obstacles were due to the persistent culture of flexibility and adaptability within the Mission, necessary in the constantly changing working environment in Donbas. Others were related to the short duration of the mandate and planning horizon (from six months to one year). The biggest challenges were, however, the heavy reliance on former military staff in the SMM headquarters in Kyiv and the role of the SMM's Operations Unit, which is unusually strong for a civilian mission. Instead of supporting the daily work, the Operations Unit took the lead in setting the agenda. The lack of strategic orientation for the overall Mission meant that the daily tasks for the teams were not set strategically. As a result, regarding the human dimension issues, relatively straightforward topics were partly covered (e.g. humanitarian situation in villages), but more critical issues were not sufficiently addressed (e.g. allegations of human rights violations).

In spring 2016, the SMM Strategic Framework for the Human Dimension – the first serious approach to strategic planning within the SMM – was approved by the Mission's leadership and circulated among teams. Four priorities areas were identified accordingly:

- protection of human rights in situations of conflict, violence, and insecurity (monitoring and reporting of e.g. civilian casualties, access to humanitarian assistance, cases of gender-based violence);

12 Cf. Claus Neukirch, *The Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine: Operational Challenges and New Horizons*, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.), OSCE Yearbook 2014, Baden-Baden 2015, pp. 183-197, here: p. 193.

13 Cf. Claus Neukirch, *The Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine in Its Second Year: Ongoing OSCE Conflict Management in Ukraine*, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.), OSCE Yearbook 2015, Baden-Baden 2016, pp. 229-239, here: p. 230.

14 Author's interview with a former SMM staff member.

- democratic space (monitoring and reporting of freedom of expression, free media and access to information, freedom of peaceful assembly);
- rule of law (monitoring and reporting of accountability for human rights violations with a focus on high profile conflict-related criminal trials, access to justice for conflict-affected groups, and challenges for justice providers arising from the conflict);
- human rights of specific groups (including ethnic and religious minorities, IDPs).

For the first time, the SMM had clear guidance with clear human dimension priorities to follow, at least on paper. As the following months demonstrated, the implementation of the Framework and shift towards a stronger focus on human dimension issues took longer and required many changes, for example in the way the SMM teams were structured and operated, and what was reported in the SMM Daily Reports. In official statements the SMM's leadership also increasingly started to link ceasefire violations to civilian casualties and the need to protect civilians, calling the conflicting parties to adhere to the ceasefire agreement.

Internal Operational Challenges

It was, however, not only a lack of clear strategy that undermined the SMM's work on human dimension issues. The SMM is divided into ten regional teams, which operate with strong operational independence from the headquarters in Kyiv. This affected aspects such as day-to-day standard operating procedures, knowledge management, and internal team structures. Whereas in some teams there were designated units specializing in human dimension issues, other teams had a primarily regional focus on specific areas of responsibility and covered all the issues in their daily work. Without clearly established official structures within teams in eastern Ukraine, the human dimension work depended heavily on the respective team and hub leaders and their priorities. In 2016, the process of formalizing the structures for the Donetsk and Luhansk teams began, including the creation of Human Dimension Units with designated staff who had gained experience in dealing with human dimension issues in the past. On the one hand, this made human dimension monitoring more professional and provided designated focal points for any questions related to these topics. As a result, the SMM started to gather and process information in a more structured and co-ordinated matter, allowing them to produce "Hardship" and "Civilian Casualties" reports which were well received. In terms of knowledge management, many sensitive cases of human rights violations could be better covered and dealt with in a standardized way, as designated staff were able to follow the cases over a longer period. On the other hand, some SMM monitors initially believed that with a designated Human Dimension Unit they did not have to raise these issues in their daily work and

engage with the civilian population. Furthermore, as some human dimension teams were stronger or simply established more quickly than in other regions, a lot of the information gathered could not be published, as the SMM aims to report in a comprehensive and comparable way across all teams.

Moreover, as the conflict intensified in 2014, most OSCE participating States deployed monitors with a predominantly military background to Ukraine. Neukirch argued that civilian monitors “lack unified training on crucial issues such as mine awareness, identification of military equipment and other techniques crucial for the observation of ceasefires, and driving armoured vehicles”.¹⁵ While monitors with a military background often had these skills, they clearly lacked background knowledge in human rights monitoring and reporting on humanitarian situations. The SMM reacted to the skills gaps with several training sessions focusing on “Crater Analysis” and “Identification of Weapon Systems”, which were attended by both civilian and military monitors. It was therefore not so much the monitors’ background that determined their skills, but rather their experience with and exposure to the Soviet and/or post-Soviet weapon systems. Learning to identify different weapon systems could be achieved within limited period of time, whereas a lack of skills in the monitoring of human rights could not be rectified quickly. Without sufficient staff from a human rights and humanitarian background, or if these monitors are not assigned to designated units, the SMM does not have the capacity to adequately monitor human dimension issues.¹⁶ However, the difficult working environment within the SMM and a somewhat militarized approach to hierarchy and leadership has not created sufficient incentives for longer-term commitment. Consequently, many of the SMM staff left the mission earlier than initially planned.¹⁷ The Human Dimension Unit at the headquarters attempted to create a pool for qualified staff within the SMM and to increase recruitment of monitors with a human rights background, however, for a long time, the ability to drive armoured vehicles and recognize weapon systems remained the key requirement for employment. The situation improved, however, from 2016 onwards, when qualified monitors with a human rights background were internally recruited to the Human Dimension Units.

Furthermore, dealing with sensitive human rights issues requires trust and knowledge of the local environment and culture. Although the SMM hired many dedicated language assistants, the majority of the SMM monitors do not speak Russian or Ukrainian. This resulted in problems dealing with sensitive cases and in following judicial proceedings.

In addition to the structural challenges within teams operating in Donbas, the SMM Human Dimension Unit in the headquarters in Kyiv also faced several challenges. Although the Mission was mandated in March 2014, the

15 Neukirch, *The Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine: Operational Challenges and New Horizons*, cited above (Note 12), p. 195.

16 Author’s interview with a former SMM staff member.

17 Author’s interview with a former SMM staff member.

first head of the Human Dimension Unit arrived in Ukraine in December 2014. Until then, only one Human Rights Advisor, one Gender Advisor and one National Legal Advisor covered the human dimension issues. As a result, the new head of the Human Dimension Unit had to establish the unit and advocate for the human dimension issues within a structure in which all other units were already operational. This had long-term consequences for the importance of human dimension issues within the SMM.¹⁸

Finally, the fact that the SMM is composed mostly of military and police staff has an effect on its organizational culture. Besides the obvious affinity to “hard security” topics such as reporting ceasefire violations and movement of military equipment, the multinational staff from various cultural and professional backgrounds have had very different levels of exposure to “soft security” issues, such as human rights violations. Moreover, in comparison with other (peacekeeping) missions, according to many former SMM monitors, the Operations Unit used to exert too much influence on the daily tasks set for each specific team.¹⁹ Although the SMM leadership has always been supportive of human dimension issues, what matters on the ground are the daily tasks set by the Operations Unit. However, particularly since 2016, there has been a growing awareness of human dimension issues, as these aspects have become part of the mainstream induction for all monitors and many new monitors have a civilian background.²⁰

External Operational Challenges

A key aspect to monitoring human dimension issues is regular access to state institutions, civil society actors, the media, and individuals. Until autumn 2015, the SMM was able to visit institutions such as schools, hospitals, and courts on a regular basis on both sides of the contact line. This access resulted, for example, in reports on the “Formerly State Financed Institutions” and “Access to Justice” in the non-government controlled area. However, the results, partly critical of the “LPR” and “DPR” institutions, were not warmly welcomed by these authorities and resulted in a restriction of access for the SMM.²¹ The “LPR” and “DPR” institutions were prohibited from any interaction with the SMM. Although some informal contacts remained, the SMM has not been able to monitor the situation on the ground comprehensively. Lack of access to official statistical data and rule-of-law actors in particular has a profound effect on the SMM’s ability to fulfil its mandate to monitor the humanitarian and human rights situation. Similarly, the SMM faces restrictions regarding official visits to media outlets operating in the temporarily occupied area. These actors’

18 Author’s interview with a former SMM staff member.

19 Author’s interview with a former SMM staff member.

20 Author’s interview with a former SMM staff member.

21 Author’s interview with a former SMM staff member.

interactions with the SMM were also restricted by the “DPR” and “LPR” authorities. The arrests of journalists critical of the “LPR” and “DPR” in 2017 confirmed that freedom of the media is limited. Although the SMM monitors could just turn up and attempt to have a spontaneous conversation at the hospitals or schools, they did not do so frequently to avoid harming their counterparts. Consequently, only informal contacts and official information that is widely available can be accessed.

Besides more structural restrictions to the access described above, the SMM faces regular freedom-of-movement violations imposed by the conflict parties. In 2017, there were more than 2,400 impediments to the fulfilment of the SMM’s mandate. These restrictions often occurred in areas where the security situation was tense and limited the possibility to report from these hot spots.²² In the context of the highly politicized conflict in eastern Ukraine, human dimension findings are often used selectively by the conflict parties for political gains in the “information war”. In addition, although the civilian population on both sides of the contact line interacted with the SMM, the monitors often noticed that many people were afraid of doing so.

Last but not least, when a mine exploded on 23 April 2017, damaging an SMM car and resulting in the death of one paramedic and injury of two SMM monitors, the freedom of movement for the SMM patrols along the contact line was further limited according to SMM internal security regulations.²³ Although some of the SMM internal restrictions were lifted, some of the areas, such as the village Krymske in the Luhansk region, were not visited for more than a year. The situation is even worse in Crimea, where the SMM is not able to operate at all.

A Way Forward

The challenges described above cannot be overcome quickly, but there are plenty of options to improve the fulfilment of the mandate with regards to the human dimension. Firstly, in contrast to current practice, where the SMM recruits Monitoring Officers based on very general requirements (with the exception of positions in Kyiv and technical staff such as camera operators), the Mission could start to specifically recruit Human Rights Officers for the eastern Ukraine teams. So far, this approach does not have enough backing at the political level in Vienna, but it would allow the SMM to improve its professionalism. Secondly, the SMM still lacks a clear strategy regarding its reasons for reporting human rights violations and other human dimension

22 Cf. OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Thematic Report, Freedom of Movement across the administrative boundary line with Crimea, 19 June 2015, SEC.FR/511/15, 22 June 2015.

23 Cf. OSCE, Annual Report 2017, Vienna 2018, p. 71.

issues. Although there are discussions within international forums about establishing an international tribunal for Donbas, the SMM does not collect the information that could be used in the future for any kind of investigation or transitional justice in a coherent manner. The lack of strategy comes together with an insufficient knowledge management system, further hindered by frequent staff rotations. Thirdly, although the SMM publishes many reports and analyses internally, these are currently not available to the broader public, academia, and journalists. Fourthly and finally, as the Minsk ceasefire agreement is not respected, the OSCE participating States must reconsider whether such a strong focus on ceasefire monitoring and withdrawal of weapons is still the priority or whether the SMM should place more emphasis on its initial mandate.

Summary

Since spring 2014, the SMM has reported the events occurring in Ukraine on a daily basis. As the conflict in Donbas has changed, so has the focus of the work of the SMM. During the military escalation in 2014 and 2015, the SMM dedicated many resources to reporting ceasefire violations, as instructed in the aftermath of the Minsk Protocol and the Minsk Memorandum. As the contact line has not moved much since spring 2015, the SMM has slowly shifted more and more of its focus towards the human dimension of security. With a new strategy, dedicated staff in the Human Dimension Units and incorporating the issues into mainstream daily tasks, the SMM is certainly better equipped to fulfil its obligations as laid out in the mandate. Still, as described above, several factors, both internal and external, hinder its work. It is necessary to continue to further professionalize staff, set a clearer strategy, and adapt the organizational structure to the changes. Consequently, as stated in one of the interviews with staff members, the SMM has not yet reached its full potential with regards to the human dimension.