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## Chairing the OSCE

*Conditions – Challenges – Conclusions. The Experience of the 2017 Austrian OSCE Chairmanship*

### *Conditions*

When Austria took over the Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) on 1 January 2017, the 57 OSCE participating States were facing a multitude of serious challenges to peace and security, including conflicts and crises such as the one in and around Ukraine, violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT), and an increasing lack of trust between states. Relations between the participating States had been severely damaged by serious violations of the OSCE's principles and values in recent years, as well as a failure to implement agreements in good faith. In parallel, fear and mistrust had soared, a situation exacerbated by a loss of trust in the leaders and organizations responsible for ensuring security and stability. In addition, there were a number of critical, unresolved institutional issues within the OSCE.

This precarious situation has led to an increasing emphasis on dialogue between states. Open, honest and constructive dialogue is the key to improving the security situation in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area, leading to mutual understanding and facilitating the search for solutions to common problems. Promoting and enabling this kind of dialogue was a centrepiece of the Austrian Chairmanship. In addition, the Organization provides the necessary normative, institutional, and operational framework to translate the results into concrete action on the ground.

It is widely recognized that this kind of meaningful dialogue is essential for improving our common security. However, this apparently overwhelming consensus on its vital importance is belied and undermined by the paucity of real dialogue in recent years. It is tempting to say there is more dialogue about dialogue than actual dialogue.

How has this situation come about? It is partly due to the politically poisoned atmosphere, which impedes not only the participating States' willingness and ability to listen, but also their capacity to engage in empathic interaction. On a more tangible level, the unresolved conflicts – so-called “protracted” conflicts, as well as the crisis in and around Ukraine – are impediments to dialogue. Furthermore, an insistence on the pre-eminence of one's own priorities while showing a profound lack of interest in the priorities of others

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Note: The views contained in this article are the personal thoughts of the authors.

has promoted a sense of security as a competition with winners and losers, rather than as a common responsibility.

The OSCE is an indispensable forum to address challenges such as these and to restore trust. Created in a time of conflict and upheaval, the OSCE was designed to facilitate reconciliation between East and West. It counteracted the prevailing ideological, zero-sum thinking and helped the participating States move towards a more secure, peaceful and prosperous future, for the benefit of all.

The OSCE area needs that “Spirit of Helsinki” more than ever, given the diverging perceptions and priorities of the participating States, which emanate from and are partially driven by their vastly differing geopolitical contexts and economic and social situations.

## *Challenges*

### *Rebuilding Trust*

During its Chairmanship, Austria focused on fostering open and constructive dialogue in all three dimensions, addressing disagreements and differing perceptions and seeking compromise solutions, in order to improve trust amongst the participating States.

Based on the mandate provided in the 2016 Declaration on the Twentieth Anniversary of the OSCE Framework for Arms Control, Austria, with the support of Germany, launched a “Structured Dialogue” on the current and future security challenges in the OSCE area to help overcome the climate of confrontation. A newly-established Informal Working Group (IWG) held high-level meetings, and there were focused discussions at the ministerial level at the informal meeting in Mauerbach and the Ministerial Council in Vienna. These fostered a better common understanding of how to reverse negative trends in the arms control architecture, work towards an environment conducive to reinvigorating conventional arms control and Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs), and revitalize co-operative security in Europe. Substantial and relatively constructive discussions contributed to higher awareness of the importance of this dialogue. It is clear that all participating States consider this on-going, open, and sincere process of dialogue an important achievement and a significant contribution to restoring trust.

The Austrian Chairmanship also invested substantial effort in issues such as economic connectivity, greening the economy, disaster risk reduction, and cyber security, enabling all participating States to deepen co-operation. Progress made in these areas aimed to foster a spirit of openness, transparency, and inclusiveness, to act as a catalyst for further joint work, to promote areas of potential compromise, and to seek consensus.

Austria also promoted inclusive and transparent discussions at both expert and political levels on topics in the human dimension, exploring ways to resolve long-standing disagreements between participating States. However, the rising intensity of the discord, as well as new areas of dispute, led to very difficult consultations. The Austrian Chairmanship expended significant time and energy to ensure that regular human dimension events, most importantly the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM), could take place. However, despite improvements to the atmosphere in human dimension meetings and discussions, pressure on the mandate and budgets of the OSCE Institutions continues to increase. In addition, participating States continue to disagree as to how to regulate civil society access to human dimension events. This discussion led to the streamlining of accession procedures for civil society, without limiting the scope or nature of access previously agreed upon by the participating States. In November 2017, the Chairmanship, with the support of the Swiss Delegation, subsequently established an open-ended informal reflection process on the participation of civil society in OSCE events.

The informal ministerial meeting in Mauerbach in July 2017 was another example of the importance Austria attaches to real dialogue. Discussions in Mauerbach focused not only on high-priority security issues such as the crisis in and around Ukraine, radicalization and structured dialogue, but also on issues critical to the functioning of the Organization, including the budget and appointments to senior OSCE positions. The Chairmanship expressed regret that the crisis of confidence was affecting not only key political issues, but also matters within the Organization, to the detriment of its ability to function. Austria emphasized the need to compromise, for the good of the Organization and the participating States. In particular, Austria criticized the protracted negotiations on the OSCE's 2017 budget and the delays in achieving consensus on the four top positions in the Organization, which left the Institutions without leadership for an extended period of time, particularly the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM). As a result of the informal discussions among ministers in Mauerbach, the OSCE participating States were finally able to come to an agreement on all four senior appointments.

Dialogue was also a main theme of the Ministerial Council in Vienna in December. The presence and active participation of a large number of ministers in the plenary sessions and approximately 100 bilateral meetings, as well as in the 16 thematic side events, demonstrated the interest and willingness of the participating States to engage in intensive dialogue.

These concentrated efforts throughout 2017 helped to improve relations between the participating States and created a more positive atmosphere within the Organization. However, it is clear that disagreements persist, with some participating States willing to block consensus on issues that they believe to be of national importance. In particular, there is a disturbing tendency to import

conflict-related disagreements into unrelated areas of OSCE work, to the detriment of the activities and functioning of the Organization, as well as to the overall security situation in the OSCE region.

### *Defusing Conflicts*

Violent conflicts continue to cause much suffering, displacement, and destruction in parts of the OSCE region. The impact on the affected population has always been of great concern to Austria. From the first days of its Chairmanship, Austria underlined the importance of conflict and crisis management, as well as humanitarian protection, with the Chairperson-in-Office (CiO), Austrian Federal Minister for Europe, Integration, and Foreign Affairs Sebastian Kurz, making early visits to conflict-affected areas, including to Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

The Chairmanship brokered an agreement in March 2017 on a timely renewal of the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine and the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk, including the important decision to strengthen the SMM through a substantial increase in its budget to allow for more monitors, increased observation activities, and improved technical equipment to enable around the clock monitoring. This was a decision of crucial importance for the OSCE and the SMM's role in managing the crisis. It has allowed the Mission to better monitor the situation on the ground, while at the same time taking proper measures to ensure the safety and security of SMM staff.

On 23 April, an armoured OSCE vehicle was heavily damaged in an explosion while on a routine patrol in Luhansk in non-government-controlled territory, killing one staff member and injuring two others. The Chairmanship instructed the OSCE Secretary General to initiate an independent forensic post-blast investigation. The Independent Forensic Investigation (IFI) team assembled and deployed by the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission at the request of the OSCE concluded its report in September 2017. The IFI found that the SMM was most likely not the intended target of the mine. In parallel, an internal investigation was conducted by the OSCE which led to a number of recommendations to improve operational planning and security measures for patrols. The Chairmanship subsequently tasked the SMM Chief Monitor with drafting and implementing a response plan based on the results of the two reports.

The Austrian Chairmanship and the CiO personally placed great emphasis on improving the humanitarian situation in crisis and conflict areas. It was a recurrent theme in the CiO's high-level meetings and negotiations throughout the Chairmanship. In particular, he put special emphasis on the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. In late August, the CiO published an article drawing attention to the acute environmental threats to security in Donbas due to the shelling and destruction of industrial complexes, chemical

factories, water treatment plants, and coal mines, as well as the accompanying risks to the population posed by repeated loss of water, electricity, and heating. Under the auspices of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), bringing together senior representatives of Ukraine, Russia, and the OSCE under the Austrian Chairmanship, the sides reached an agreement on creating limited safety zones near selected installations. Austria kept developments and challenges in the crisis high on the Organization's agenda, organizing a number of events throughout the year with Martin Sajdik, Special Representative of the CiO in Ukraine and in the TCG, and key SMM staff and pursuing a Ministerial Council decision on the crisis in and around Ukraine.

With regard to the humanitarian situation in the aftermath of the 2008 war in Georgia, the Chairmanship engaged in high-level discussions with the authorities in Tbilisi and supported an expert workshop on environmental challenges in the eastern Black Sea region. This workshop had a dual purpose: first, to prevent ecological damage in the region, and second, to build confidence between the sides in order to facilitate the peaceful settlement of the conflict.

In addition, the CiO visited a camp for internally displaced persons and addressed the participants of an Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) meeting in Ergneti, further raising awareness of the humanitarian situation of the local population. He underlined the Chairmanship's commitment to prioritizing efforts to resolve the conflict and to strengthening dialogue and confidence-building measures.

Regarding the Transnistrian settlement process, the Chairmanship used the expert working groups to find technical solutions for core issues of common concern. This approach led to progress on the freedom of movement for people, goods, and services which was achieved by the ground-breaking decision to open the bridge at Gura Bîcului-Bychok for civilian traffic. The opening of this bridge in November 2017 created a new momentum and led to a formal meeting in the 5+2 format in Vienna on 27-28 November. In close cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Moldova and other 5+2 partners, Austria was able to put a number of complex topics back on the agenda for discussion and establish a new, active pace at all levels of the negotiation process. These historic agreements created a new dynamic in the negotiations, as well as tangible improvements in the lives of the local population on both sides. It is important to continue with this results-oriented approach, which was confirmed in a consensus declaration at the Ministerial Council in Vienna.

The situation regarding Nagorno-Karabakh remained tense in 2017, with disagreements between the sides having a negative impact on different aspects of the OSCE's work, most notably the operation of the OSCE Office in Yerevan. Despite the concerted efforts of the Austrian Chairmanship, including interventions by the CiO and the former Federal President of Austria, Heinz Fischer, it was impossible to reach consensus on the renewal of the mandate of the Office in Yerevan. The mission therefore closed in August 2017.

### *Preventing and Countering Terrorism and VERLT*

In 2016, terrorist attacks in OSCE participating States caused more than a thousand deaths. Given the significant threat posed to all participating States by violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT), for the first time, the Chairmanship appointed an OSCE Special Representative on Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism, Professor Peter Neumann of King's College, London. Austria had two goals in mind: first, to raise the profile of this issue within the Organization; and second, to better harness the OSCE's capabilities to combat this phenomenon.

The Chairmanship furthermore organized a series of regional workshops with young experts in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Black Sea region, and Western Europe, as well as the Mediterranean region, on addressing this challenge. Austria also brought together more than 500 participants for a major counter-terrorism conference in May, and engaged foreign ministers from across the OSCE area in a substantive discussion on this issue. This followed a Mediterranean Conference in Vienna in October 2016, held under the Austrian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Partners Group and attended by high-ranking officials, which dealt with the issues of radicalization and migration from a youth perspective.

On the basis of these and other discussions, the Chairmanship's Special Representative prepared recommendations and a compilation of best-practice models and lessons learned in the OSCE region. The study will assist states in effectively combating this phenomenon and strengthening the OSCE as a networking hub, also by capitalizing on the OSCE's local presence in strategically important regions such as South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Implementing these proposals will strengthen the OSCE's capabilities and enable the Organization to make a more effective contribution to countering VERLT in its participating States. With Austrian support, the OSCE is now developing this compilation into a series of regional handbooks to assist participating States in countering violent radicalization.

### *Strengthening the Organization*

Throughout its Chairmanship, Austria engaged intensively with OSCE field missions and their respective host countries to ensure they felt a strong sense of ownership of the missions' work, with a focus on impact and results in support of agreed reform priorities.

One of the first challenges Austria faced in this regard was the necessity to achieve consensus on the outstanding renewal of the mandates of five field operations. At the request of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, with the assistance of a Special Envoy, the Austrian Chairmanship conducted in-depth negotiations on the adaptation and renewal of the mandates of their two field operations, brokering agreements to transform them into the Programme Office in Bishkek

and the Programme Office in Dushanbe. Two additional mandates were unblocked as a result of discussions with the host countries and other participating States. Unfortunately, no consensus could be found on renewing the mandate of the Office in Yerevan. A new project-based co-operation plan was subsequently developed between the OSCE and Armenia.

The OSCE's response to the political crisis in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) in April, under the guidance and with the active involvement and support of the Chairmanship, demonstrated the Organization's ability to respond quickly and effectively to evolving situations and to contribute positively, in a comprehensive, co-ordinated manner, to assist a participating State in defusing tensions and moving towards the long-term resolution of underlying challenges.

When Austria took over the Chairmanship on 1 January 2017, it was faced with several interlinked operational challenges, namely the need to adopt a budget for the Organization for 2017, approve new scales of contribution, and appoint new leadership of the Secretariat and Institutions.

The Chairmanship therefore had to overcome numerous political obstacles to ensure that the Organization has the necessary means to carry out its mandate.

Facilitating consensus on the annual budget of the Organization has become an exhausting exercise, repeated every year with the same difficulties, absorbing enormous amounts of the time and energy of the Chairmanship and the participating States – resources that would be much better invested in furthering the Organization's programmatic activities. This perpetual struggle has a negative impact on the effective functioning of the whole Organization, particularly when the budget is not adopted on time, which is now the norm rather than the exception. Budget negotiations lasted a full nine months under the Austrian Chairmanship, and the 2017 budget was not adopted until 1 June 2017. This significant delay led to uncertainties in planning and implementing programmes and activities in all OSCE executive structures. Moreover, the continued trend of adopting strict zero-nominal growth budgets has begun to negatively affect the substance of the Organization. This situation is becoming more acute with time. The same is true for the discussions surrounding the new scale of contributions to the Organization. Despite the concerted efforts of the Austrian Chair of the Informal Working Group on Scales, no consensus could be reached on a decision by the 31 December 2017 deadline. Unfortunately, the participating States have not demonstrated a willingness to make the compromises necessary on this issue to achieve a sustainable result that provides a real foundation for the work of the OSCE in the coming years.

Why do the participating States have such difficulty coming to a consensus on the OSCE's budget and scales of contribution? Many states cite financial constraints to justify their insistence on a policy of zero-nominal growth. This policy means that every year the Organization has fewer funds to respond to challenges which are continuously growing in number and

complexity. However, ten years after the 2008 financial crisis, the economies of most participating States have recovered and are once again growing. This argument is becoming less and less credible, particularly when one takes into account the fact that the OSCE is a comparatively low-cost organization, offering excellent value for money. The downward trajectory of the OSCE's budget is even more worrying when contrasted with the trend of rising spending for military purposes. Has the concept of comprehensive, co-operative, equal and indivisible security – the *raison d'être* of the OSCE – lost ground to the promotion of hard security? Is co-operative security no longer seen as a worthy investment? The level and intensity of engagement by participating States in the work of the Organization would seem to indicate its continuing relevance. So why are states so reluctant to provide it with adequate resources?

In part, this situation could be a consequence of the current antagonistic security environment. Disagreements that might previously have been resolved through dialogue are now seen as points of principle, on which no compromise is possible – regardless of the actual amount of money involved or the negative impact on the Organization or relations between states. Political disputes have infiltrated what was hitherto a largely technical sphere, with blocking the budget becoming an effective – albeit destructive – weapon of choice for some participating States to realize their specific political interests and goals.

The Austrian Chairmanship also faced the key challenge of appointing a new OSCE Secretary General and new Heads of the three Institutions (High Commissioner on National Minorities/HCNM, Representative on Freedom of the Media/RFOM, and Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights/ODIHR). This unprecedented situation, in which all four senior staff positions were to be filled at the same time, was of the highest priority to the Chairmanship in the first half of the year. With the invaluable support and assistance of a “Group of Friends”, the Chairmanship conducted an inclusive and intensive consultation process with participating States, both in Vienna and in the capitals. The group, composed of five Heads of Delegation from small, medium, and large participating States acting in their personal capacity, not only advised the Chairmanship at different stages of the consultations, but also actively supported the negotiation team by taking on various negotiation tasks. This turned out to be an effective working method, allowing parts of the heavy workload to be shared with the Group. More importantly, the internal consultations with the Group allowed them to shape the process in a way that guaranteed its consistency and transparency. This was indispensable to achieving a final consensus among the participating States in a climate rife with general mistrust and widespread rumours. A political understanding on all four positions was finally reached at the ministerial level at the informal meeting in Mauerbach in July and subsequently formalized. The agreement on these appointments marked a crucial milestone with a view to ensuring the functioning of the OSCE as a whole.



The legal status of the OSCE continued to be a focus of the Austrian Chairmanship in 2017. Special Advisor Ambassador Helmut Tichy chaired three meetings of the Informal Working Group on Strengthening the Legal Framework of the OSCE. Short of developing a solution that would grant international legal personality in accordance with the four options discussed in the Informal Working Group, participating States further explored ways to enhance the legal status of the OSCE through domestic legislation and/or through bilateral agreements with the OSCE, as well as by concluding an agreement on the legal status, privileges, and immunities of the OSCE between interested participating States outside of the OSCE's framework. An extended meeting of the Informal Working Group in July 2017 allowed for intensified discussions amongst delegations and with legal experts in the field on the practical implications for field operations and with regard to the duty of care. Furthermore, a Headquarters Agreement between Austria and the OSCE was signed in June 2017 – a clear recognition by Austria that it considers the OSCE as having international legal personality on the basis of customary international law. Poland followed suit with a host country agreement concluded with ODIHR.

#### *Assuming the Chairmanship*

Given the heavy burden and high expectations placed on the country holding the Chairmanship, one might ask why any state would volunteer to lead the Organization in such difficult times. Austria saw these challenges as formidable, but not insurmountable, and believed that it could make a positive contribution towards improving regional security. For Austria, assuming the Chairmanship meant showing responsibility. The OSCE Chairmanship is a commitment to multilateral diplomacy as the most appropriate means for international interaction, to promote prosperity, mutual understanding and prevent and resolve conflict. Smaller countries like Austria rely on strong and functional international organizations. By investing in effective multilateralism – and by liaising and allying with other like-minded states – smaller countries are better able to ensure that their interests are taken into account even when bigger and more powerful states have differing views.

In addition, as the host country of the OSCE Secretariat and the Office of the RFOM, as well as the seat of the Permanent Council, the Organization's main day-to-day decision-making body, Austria has a special obligation towards the Organization that goes beyond the mere functions of a host country. Austria's commitment to the Organization and its fundamental principles, its dedication to promoting these principles and its efforts to strengthen the OSCE prove that Austria is not only hosting the Organization, but also actively contributing to its proper programmatic and organizational functioning.

In addition to the specific challenges enumerated above, we should note that every Chairmanship has a number of general challenges to face in leading

the OSCE in thematic, programmatic, and organizational terms. The OSCE covers a vast area, thematically and geographically speaking, and it is the daunting task of the Chairmanship not only to maintain an overview, but also to facilitate a coherent, consensual organizational approach in a timely manner.

This means that the Chairmanship must deal with a variety of perceptions and priorities, cultures and values that prevail in the 57 participating States. It also means dealing with conflicts, both internal and between participating States, each one unique in its roots, genesis, intensity, and effects. The Chairmanship must attempt to reconcile the manifest interests and convictions of states that have – sometimes fundamental – political, social, economic, or cultural differences.

Despite – or perhaps due to – the exceptional diversity within and among the participating States, the OSCE has always emphasized consensus. It is one of the fundamental principles of the Organization. This requires additional effort and diplomatic skill from the Chairmanship, because the Chairmanship often finds itself in situations where it is necessary to “square the circle”. The increasingly antagonistic and conflict-driven political environment in the OSCE region further aggravates the Chairmanship’s position in this regard.

The Chairmanship must therefore respect its obligation to promote and protect the OSCE acquis, not only to proactively remind participating States that they have all agreed to these values and commitments, but also to insist on their respect for and implementation of this acquis.

Consensus is one of the OSCE’s greatest strengths, but it can also be a fundamental weakness. In good times, it strengthens the Organization’s capability, effectiveness and reputation. In difficult times, however, states have demonstrated a tendency to use the requirement for consensus to link disparate issues, leading to deadlock and organizational paralysis.

#### *Between Obligation and Ambition*

The sheer scope and level of ongoing challenges and the range of thematic and geographical issues and developments leaves little room for additional programmatic ambitions. The “obligatory” part of the Chairmanship’s programme absorbs most of its attention and resources. The continuation of given themes and long-standing topics, as well as the intense pace of traditional events in the three dimensions and existing negotiating formats almost fully determine a Chairmanship’s plan of action. Nevertheless, the Chairmanship must reserve the capacity to respond to unexpected developments, while still finding the time and resources to implement its own particular priorities for the year.

## Conclusions

A number of initiatives and approaches of the Austrian Chairmanship had positive outcomes. Some of the most relevant for wider consideration are:

- *Efforts to foster open, transparent and respectful dialogue.* It is a mistake to think that we can demonize “the other” and reject co-operation without damaging our own security. It is more important than ever to keep channels of communication open at all levels, and to enhance contact between governments, civil society, academics, and the media. They all have a stake in the outcome, and have perspectives and ideas to contribute. The Structured Dialogue on current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area is a vital example of this. Honest dialogue is the only way to overcome the current stalemate and address diverging perspectives and priorities.
- *Ownership of participating States in the OSCE.* The Austrian Chairmanship conducted intensive outreach to countries hosting field operations, as well as those who expressed concerns about the functioning of the Organization (e.g. open-ended dialogue on civil society participation in OSCE events). Ongoing battles over funding for the Organization and continual violations of OSCE principles and values show, however, that efforts must be redoubled. We need a renewed commitment by participating States to respect the Organization’s fundamental principles and values. This Organization needs the full engagement and support – political and financial – of every participating State, in recognition of the simple fact that most challenges to security in the region can only be tackled successfully by working together.
- *Focus on addressing common challenges.* Participating States engage most enthusiastically when they see a direct relevance for their priorities and needs. The Austrian Chairmanship emphasized dealing with the major challenges to internal security posed by the increasing threats of terrorism and growing radicalization, especially of young people.
- *Safety and security of the populations affected by conflict in the OSCE area.* We must remember that there are people living in these conflict areas who continue to suffer on a daily basis. This Organization needs to demonstrate credibly that it makes a positive difference on the ground to the daily lives of the people. This will also help counteract our citizens’ increasing loss of trust in state institutions and international organizations that are supposed to safeguard peace and our values.
- *Careful, pragmatic work on sensitive issues gets better results than militancy.* This is not a call to compromise on principles, but rather to actively look for areas in which to build confidence between and within participating States on controversial issues.

- *Direct, interactive discussions between OSCE experts and experts from other international organizations deepen existing ties.* Discussions between OSCE experts and experts from other international organizations (e.g. UN Group of Governmental Experts on Information Security participation in the Informal Working Group established according to Permanent Council Decision No. 1039; side events in New York on the margins of the UN Women's Rights Commission in March and the UN Security Council in October) helped strengthen ties with other international organizations and reinforce the foundation for the OSCE's work.
- *Inclusion of actors from the private sector fosters real progress.* For instance, the high-level academic conference on connectivity in the economic and environmental fields in May 2017 in Linz brought together important representatives and decision-makers from the fields of business, politics, diplomacy, and academia. Similarly, the internet freedom conference in October 2017 was held with the participation of representatives from the media, internet intermediaries, academia, and civil society. Both events generated a number of tangible recommendations that promoted real progress on one of the most challenging aspects of economic co-operation and freedom of expression respectively.
- *A cross-dimensional approach to gender issues.* This enabled the participating States to address a wide range of gender-related topics (e.g. women's inclusion in all phases of the conflict cycle; UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; violence against women) from a different perspective, thereby gaining new insights or delving into new aspects of well-known topics.
- *Appointment of five Special Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office on Youth and Security.* This enabled the inclusion of a youth perspective in a broad range of activities. The Special Representatives advised the Chairmanship on youth issues; voiced the views of young people at OSCE events on issues such as preventing and countering radicalization and terrorism, migration, human rights, political participation, and cybersecurity; and actively championed the concerns of young people in the OSCE region.
- *Close communication and co-operation with the OSCE structures.* The Chairmanship benefitted from the unparalleled expertise of the OSCE staff in the Secretariat, Institutions, and field operations, and was able to capitalize on direct channels of communication to respond efficiently and effectively to challenges.