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Sustaining Peace, Sustaining Development – The Role of the OSCE

Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda)¹ created a global framework, a common language, and shared goals that we can all rally around to transform our world. Governments are integrating these goals into national plans and policies. Donors are using them as a benchmark for their support. Business leaders are showing commitment and civil society is mobilizing to help create further momentum. In 2019, we have had significant exchanges on how the OSCE contributes to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how these Goals help to focus the work of the OSCE. With its inclusive membership, geographical reach, convening power, and depth of expertise on multiple security issues, and with its institutions, field operations, and programmatic activities, the OSCE has significant capacity and potential to support SDG implementation at the national level. While a few OSCE participating States appear reluctant to formally link the OSCE's work with the SDGs, many others have raised their voice in support. They note that the OSCE's comprehensive security concept and the holistic nature of the 2030 Agenda fit together well, and not just in relation to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). They point out that implementation of the SDGs is a shared responsibility of all UN member states. And they feel that working through regional organizations like the OSCE can be one important way in which states can further their national and collective SDG-related objectives. Even in the absence of a specific OSCE mandate, there are sufficient markers that explicitly link the OSCE to the 2030 Agenda, including in Ministerial Council Decisions in the OSCE's second dimension of security, the Economic and Environmental Dimension. And for all practical purposes, the SDGs have already become an important point of reference for partner organizations far beyond the UN and affiliated agencies. As the world's largest regional security organization, the OSCE can only benefit from aligning its activities with the 2030 Agenda in an open spirit, in a demand-driven manner, and in response to the needs of OSCE participating States.

Note: The author would like to thank Mr David Buerstedde for his assistance during the preparation of this contribution.

1 United Nations, General Assembly, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015, 70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1, 21 October 2015, at: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf. See also: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.

The 2030 Agenda

UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda at a summit in September 2015. They committed to achieving 17 SDGs and 169 associated targets by 2030 “in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet”. Compared to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs are broader, more ambitious, and also more political. They translate legitimate aspirations for social justice into political commitments. Whereas the MDGs mostly targeted developing countries, the SDGs commit 193 countries, including 56 of the OSCE’s 57 participating States.² Significantly, from an OSCE perspective, the 2030 Agenda reinforces the nexus between development and peace. It firmly introduces peace and security into a development concept that at the UN has traditionally focused on economic, social, and later also environmental aspects. For a security organization, notably one such as the OSCE that is premised on a comprehensive approach to security that incidentally dates back to the mid-1970s, this link is an essential starting point when considering our relationship with the SDGs.

Furthermore, UN member states made a commitment not only to work towards SDG implementation in their own countries, but to also support each other, including at regional and global levels. As the world’s largest regional security arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE contributes to global security within its region through conflict management responses in crisis situations, but above all through longer-term structural conflict prevention and confidence-building. The 2030 Agenda promises to re-energize international action to advance development, peace, and security around the globe. It also opens up UN action to a wide network of collaboration and offers a unique opportunity for the OSCE to better articulate its position as a linchpin between the global and national levels of policy development and implementation. Since the 2030 Agenda is the key international framework promoted by the UN, it is difficult to imagine a modern interpretation of Chapter VIII without strong references to the SDGs.

The Five Ps

Both the OSCE and the UN have long focused on peace and security, conflict prevention, the protection of human rights, and many other security-related issues. As we shall see, there is also significant cohesion between the SDGs and the OSCE’s commitments and mandates. In fact, the OSCE connects to all 17 SDGs and many of their individual targets, as well as to the five major themes that group some of the Goals: *people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership*.

² The Holy See is a permanent observer at the UN, not a UN member state.

Of these five themes, *peace* is the key theme for us. As stated in the preamble to the 2030 Agenda, there can be no sustainable development without peace, and no peace without sustainable development. Diverse OSCE efforts have an impact on peace and development. Today, Europe is living through times of profound mistrust and growing tensions. In the current polarized security environment, the OSCE remains the only platform for inclusive East-West dialogue and co-operation on multiple hard and soft security issues. We contribute to peace by investing in early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, and conflict resolution, as well as post-conflict rehabilitation. The OSCE's response to the crisis in and around Ukraine, in particular the deployment of the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine in 2014, is a prominent example of the Organization's early action and crisis management capabilities.

The theme of *people* is also of great significance for us. The Helsinki Final Act was not centred on interstate relations alone, but also on *people*. Along with rules for how states should treat each other, it established norms for how states should treat their citizens. It was this approach that made respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in one country a matter of concern for the entire OSCE community. OSCE institutions monitor the implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms and promote integration in diverse societies. One of our main priorities has always been to reduce the vulnerability of people in conflict-affected areas. Current examples are to be found in Ukraine, where the SMM continues to be instrumental in brokering so-called "windows of silence" to facilitate the repair of critical civilian infrastructure such as water distribution systems disrupted by the fighting. The 2019 Slovak OSCE Chairmanship has put a strong emphasis on improving the lives of individual people.³ For example, it has pushed hard for the much-needed repair of the Stanytsia Luhanska Bridge as the only crossing point for civilians between government and non-government controlled areas in Luhansk Oblast in eastern Ukraine.

Prosperity is strongly linked to the OSCE's second dimension of security. Our institutions and field operations, and above all the Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA), promote good economic governance and the rule of law as prerequisites for building peaceful and prosperous communities. Our activities are designed to strengthen cross-border economic co-operation, enhance good governance and the climate for business and investment, and counter corruption.

Planet refers to the environmental challenges that are threatening livelihoods and impacting on security world-wide. The OSCE brings a strong security perspective to the international environmental discourse and fosters cross-border and regional co-operation to address environmental challenges, including at the nexus between climate and security.

3 OSCE Slovakia 2019 Slovensko, Programme of the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship 2019, available at: <https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/408353>.

Finally, *partnership* is critical to making progress towards an ambitious agenda that spans the globe but ultimately has to be implemented locally. The OSCE works with the UN and many other partner organizations to forge effective responses to traditional and emerging challenges. Global and regional partnerships and coalitions that include national governments, international and regional organizations, the private sector, civil society, the research community, and women and youth will be important drivers for implementing the SDGs.

Linkages with the SDGs

For the OSCE, SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) is the Goal that most closely matches our mandates. It sums up a substantive part of what we are trying to achieve. In UN terminology, SDG 16 is now often referred to as SDG 16+ because it is considered an enabler or catalyst for the successful implementation of many other SDGs. So, this makes SDG 16 even more relevant from an OSCE perspective.

The OSCE promotes peaceful, just, and inclusive societies in a number of ways, including through dialogue and confidence-building, capacity-building, and the sharing of good practices in numerous relevant areas, such as police and justice reform, border management, democratic oversight of the security forces, and many other issues. In times of political crisis, OSCE field presences underpin the OSCE's early warning role and its capacity to defuse tensions through dialogue facilitation at the local level. Many of them offer long-term support to make institutions more effective, inclusive, and accountable. They often do so in conjunction with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE's in-house knowledge hub on democratic governance, the rule of law, and human rights and fundamental freedoms. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM) specializes in free media and the freedom of expression. And the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) engages with governments and national minorities in support of peaceful coexistence in diverse societies.

All of this relates to sustainable peace, and to SDG 16 in particular, but the OSCE also has multiple linkages with the other SDGs. SDG 4 (Quality Education) is one example. Education can play a key role in preventing conflict by fostering a sense of opportunity and belonging, accommodating diversity and languages, or allowing for multiple views on history. The HCNM regularly reminds both government and national minority representatives of the right to education in minority languages on the one hand, and the importance of mastering the state language on the other. ODIHR and the Organization's field operations promote a culture of peace and non-violence through programmes to combat hate crime and promote tolerance in communities and schools. For example, the Mission to Skopje contributed to policy discussions that led to

national education strategies, and the Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina has spoken out against segregated schools and is promoting more inclusive approaches.

SDG 4 (Quality Education) in turn links to SDG 1 (No Poverty), because poverty is not only about a lack of income and resources. Its manifestations also include limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination, as well as a lack of participation in decision-making. Through awareness-raising, capacity-building, and scholarships, the OSCE promotes the social and economic inclusion of minority groups such as Roma and Sinti. The link to the peace element of SDG 16 is equally clear, as growing inequality can undermine social cohesion and increase political and social tensions that may in turn drive instability and violent conflict. There are many examples that demonstrate how the SDGs connect to each other and to the work of the OSCE, reflecting the breadth of our engagement and the comprehensive nature of security.

A further example illustrates this point well. SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) may not seem an obvious Goal to link to the OSCE but it includes a target to substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and contamination. Anyone who is aware of our activities to assess risks at industrial legacy sites in Armenia and Georgia, can draw the connection. The OSCE is also assisting Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to minimize the impact of uranium legacy sites on the surrounding communities. And we have supported Armenia, Belarus, Ukraine, and others with the disposal of *mélange* – a highly toxic, liquid rocket fuel used during the Cold War. There are thus more than just a few connections that can be made, but in many cases the links have not yet been articulated.

The OSCE's Second Dimension

The OSCE's second dimension has been closely connected with sustainable development for many years. The 2003 OSCE Maastricht Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension includes a dedicated section on sustainable development, and further references were included in several subsequent Ministerial Council Decisions. Specific references to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs appeared in the 2016 Hamburg Ministerial Decision on strengthening good governance and promoting connectivity⁴ and the 2018 Milan Ministerial Declaration on the digital economy⁵. And the connections are quite striking. The OSCE fosters co-operation on a variety of economic

4 OSCE, Ministerial Council, Hamburg 2016, Decision No. 4/16, Strengthening Good Governance and Promoting Connectivity, MC.DEC/4/16, 9 December 2016, available at: <https://www.osce.org/cio/289316>.

5 OSCE, Ministerial Council, Milan 2018, Declaration on the Digital Economy as a Driver for Promoting Co-operation, Security and Growth, MC.DOC/2/18, 7 December 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/405920>.

issues that are closely linked to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), including good governance and anti-corruption, labour migration, transport, trade facilitation, connectivity, and the economic empowerment of women.

Meanwhile, our work on energy security has strong economic and environmental components and is linked firmly to SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy). The OSCE brings together energy decision-makers from major energy producing, transit, and consuming countries to share best practices on sustainable and renewable energy, energy efficiency, and the protection of energy infrastructure. OSCE projects include capacity-building in support of an energy road map for renewables in Turkmenistan, developing dam safety rules for hydroelectric reservoirs in Tajikistan, and providing isolated farms in Kyrgyzstan with solar energy. We are also developing a Virtual Competency and Training Centre on the Protection of Critical Energy Networks in close cooperation with the 2019 Slovak Chairmanship.

In the environmental field, the OSCE has long been a leader in promoting accountability, transparency, and environmental participation rights in our region. We promote comprehensive stakeholder consultations and work on climate change mitigation, wildfire management, and water governance. The OSCE-supported network of Aarhus Centres, which now includes 59 Centres in 14 countries, provides tools for civil society to increase public participation and access to information and justice in the sustainable development sphere. This work links up with SDGs 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), as well as 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Water is a strategic resource and an essential element of national and regional security. The OSCE's water governance and diplomacy activities have become a centrepiece of our action in the second dimension. Water scarcity and pollution can threaten socio-economic development and political stability, but water can also be a source of co-operation. The OSCE promotes good water governance and supports cross-boundary management of water resources. Achievements include: the Dniester River Basin Treaty and establishment of the Dniester River Basin Commission between Moldova and Ukraine; the establishment of the Chu-Talas River Basin Commission between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan; the facilitation of negotiations for a bilateral agreement between Azerbaijan and Georgia on the Kura River Basin; and the promotion of water co-operation between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The OSCE also addresses water-related disasters and assists with the restoration of water-related ecosystems to mitigate floods.

Water and security issues are closely linked to climate change and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Incidents of extreme weather are becoming more frequent and intense. Slow onset events like desertification, glacial melting, land and forest degradation, increasing temperatures, and rising sea levels are threatening food, water, and energy security. The OSCE has helped to identify, map,

and address potential security risks stemming from climate change through participatory approaches engaging governmental agencies, including security actors, civil society, the research community, and others. Even though OSCE participating States have not given the OSCE a specific climate change mandate yet, the OSCE can act as a catalyst in assisting participating States to assess the repercussions of climate change on security and to develop adaptation strategies.

Cross-Cutting and Cross-Dimensional Approaches

In the framework of SDGs, cross-cutting approaches are increasingly important for ensuring policy coherence across the Goals. At the OSCE, we also need to employ horizontal approaches to effectively address increasingly interlinked and complex security challenges. In many of our activities we are consciously making use of the OSCE's toolbox across the three dimensions. Security is truly comprehensive only when we draw strength from the different perspectives that we cover institutionally and programmatically. A rigid separation would artificially limit our scope and effectiveness. Instead, we are increasingly pooling our expertise from different fields of OSCE engagement, for example, when promoting counter-terrorism measures that respect the rights of the individual.

OSCE action to address trafficking in human beings is a prime example of a strongly cross-dimensional OSCE activity. The OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings has been highly successful in co-ordinating with other parts of the Organization and leveraging their expertise for OSCE anti-trafficking activities. Trafficking in persons is specifically mentioned in three targets under three SDGs: 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). However, many other SDG targets and goals are relevant because trafficking is closely connected to wider development issues, including poverty, education, child labour, abuse, and exploitation, gender inequality and discrimination, migration, and others.

There are other issues that by their very nature are cross-cutting. Implementing SDG 5 (Gender Equality) is a central challenge but also a critical opportunity for making headway on the Goals in their entirety. The OSCE is committed to ensuring that a gender perspective is integrated into all its programmatic work and operations. Gender equality is a fundamental human right, and equal rights and opportunities for women and men are essential for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. Societies that do well on gender equality are also more resilient and carry a lower risk of conflict. Achieving gender equality and empowering women are cornerstones of our comprehensive security approach, which protects and promotes the human rights and dig-

nity of women and men. We work to prevent and combat violence against women and girls, and we promote women's participation in public, political and economic life. One of the most obvious linkages with the SDGs and the UN in this area is through our work in support of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) on women, peace, and security, which recognizes the pivotal role women play in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction.

For a number of years now, the OSCE has stepped up its engagement with and for young people. The 2030 Agenda highlights the critical role of young women and men as agents for creating a better world. From the Helsinki Final Act onwards, OSCE participating States have repeatedly acknowledged the positive role that young people can play in all three dimensions of security. The 2018 Milan Ministerial Declaration on the Role of Youth in Contributing to Peace and Security Efforts was inspired by the two UNSCRs on youth, peace, and security, 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018). In 2019, the OSCE has accelerated its efforts to develop more opportunities to integrate youth into our security debates and give them more space in OSCE activities. This year, we launched the "Perspectives 20-30" initiative that will see young experts and practitioners develop a youth-driven vision on security and co-operation towards the year 2030 and beyond.

Engaging with the UN on the SDGs, Engaging with the SDGs at the OSCE

The UN-led SDG review process is open to multi-stakeholder contributions, and the OSCE contributes to the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) that meets in New York each year to review the implementation of the SDGs. In July 2019, the HLPF convened around the theme of "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality" and carried out an in-depth review of Goals SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities was a lead discussant at the HLPF discussion on SDG 16. On the fringes of the HLPF, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, in co-operation with the 2019 Slovak OSCE Chairmanship, organized a side-event on Preventive Diplomacy in the Changing Landscape of Modern Conflict: The Role of Regional Organizations. The event brought together key regional organizations and other partners to share best practices and foster co-operation on preventive diplomacy.

OSCE meetings are also increasingly addressing sustainable development and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. In June 2019, the Economic and Environmental Committee held a thematic meeting on "Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development". It was addressed by a high-level official of the UN Secretariat's Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the entity that supports the HLPF review process.

In addition, the Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in July 2019 convened around the topic of “Advancing sustainable development to promote security: the role of parliaments”.

So, to all intents and purposes, the OSCE is already raising its voice in the SDG review process and there is growing awareness of the importance of this global agenda for the OSCE. But to explore existing and potential roles in greater detail, in June 2019, I organized an informal OSCE Security Days expert round-table on “The OSCE and the Sustainable Development Goals” with speakers from the OSCE, the UN, participating States, academia, and civil society organizations.⁶ This event, hosted by the UN Office in Vienna, was probably the most wide-ranging discussion of the OSCE’s contribution to the 2030 Agenda to date. One central recommendation from the event was that the OSCE should map out this relationship in greater detail in order to help raise the profile of our work and allow us to contribute to SDG review processes in a more systematic way.

Mapping would be a first important step. However, looking forward, and based on discussions at the event, if mandated by participating States, the OSCE could act as a platform to facilitate SDG-related policy coherence through data and information exchange. The OSCE could also serve as a regional platform for peer learning, mutual support, exchange of best practices, and even contribute its expertise to support voluntary regional or national reporting. The OSCE could also contribute data of its own to help monitor the implementation of certain indicators. For example, recent OSCE research on how women are affected by physical, sexual, and psychological violence in conflict and non-conflict settings⁷ is likely to be useful to policy-makers, particularly in relation to SDG 5 (Gender Equality). The research was carried out in parts of the OSCE area where such data had previously been hard to come by or was non-existent. So, if participating States decided to give the OSCE a more specific mandate, there are various ways in which we could contribute to strengthening policy coherence and evidence-based policymaking at the local, national, and regional levels.

SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)

The SDGs are an indispensable framework for all UN agencies that the OSCE works with and they are gaining in relevance for many other partners as well. These collaborative relationships alone are also pushing the OSCE to consider its own activities in the light of the 2030 Agenda.

6 For further information, session recordings, and final report, see: Security Days: The OSCE and the Sustainable Development Goals, 4 June 2019, at: <https://www.osce.org/secdays/2019/OSCE-and-SDGS>.

7 The main report of March 2019 and all other publications on the OSCE-led Survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women are available at: <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/413237>.

In our programme activities, we often have UN counterparts and have developed action-oriented partnerships with them. Some are at the intersection between OSCE conflict cycle activities and humanitarian and development work. For example, the OSCE works closely with the UNHCR, especially in the context of the Geneva International Discussions, and with the Minsk Group Co-Chairs, as well as with the SMM to Ukraine and the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine. This co-operation includes joint capacity-building for OSCE and UNHCR staff, and the use of a “Protection Checklist”⁸ jointly produced by the UNHCR and the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre.

Other partnerships concern environmental co-operation. The Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative draws together the OSCE and various UN counterparts, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). With their specialized, but complementary mandates and expertise, partners in ENVSEC have helped to deliver an integrated response to environment and security challenges since 2003. Programmes delivered through ENVSEC are strongly supportive of relevant SDGs and offer a model for multi-agency programming.

In 2019, I have been particularly proud of the OSCE’s co-chairing of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT), together with UN Women. ICAT is a policy forum mandated by the UN General Assembly to improve co-ordination among UN agencies and other relevant international organizations to facilitate a holistic and comprehensive approach to preventing and combating trafficking in persons.

There are many more examples of how the OSCE works in partnership with UN agencies and other relevant organizations to develop effective responses. As we deepen our multiple partnerships, the OSCE’s link to the SDGs can serve as an important catalyst for intensifying our relations and for increasing the OSCE’s effectiveness, impact, and visibility.

Our partnerships with UN agencies are likely to benefit also from specific initiatives that are closely related to the 2030 Agenda. One example that fits OSCE priorities is the International Decade for Action on “Water for Sustainable Development” that was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly for the period from 2018 to 2028.

The SDGs are also rapidly becoming an indispensable framework for resource mobilization, prioritization, and allocation. They shape development policies by international organizations, donor states, and international non-governmental organizations. Many international organizations and donor states now explicitly refer to the SDGs in their programme goals. Standing on the side-lines of this global agenda is not an option. Instead we should proactively seek opportunities to promote the more co-ordinated approaches that

8 OSCE/UNHCR, Protection Checklist: Addressing Displacement and Protection of Displaced Populations and Affected Communities along the Conflict Cycle: a Collaborative Approach, February 2014, available at: <https://www.osce.org/cpc/111464>.

the 2030 Agenda is calling for. On the strength of good examples such as ICAT and ENVSEC, the OSCE should continue to leverage its partnerships to boost implementation of the SDGs.

Effective implementation requires a “whole-of-society approach” and collaboration at all levels, as well as new and innovative partnerships. This also includes collaborative relationships with private businesses, particularly at the intersection of technology and security. For example, the OSCE is working closely with the Tech Against Trafficking Initiative (TAT), a coalition of technology companies that includes Amazon and Microsoft, among other big names in the industry. The reason is simple. Because almost any human trafficking crime has an ICT element and perpetrators use the services and platforms of private technology companies, preventing and combating trafficking cannot be conceived without strong partnerships with these companies.

The OSCE’s experience of participating in, creating, maintaining, and growing mutually beneficial and effective partnerships could also be usefully shared with other regional organizations seeking to enhance their impact through co-operation. The OSCE offers a significant forum for taking such collaboration forward at the regional level and is a natural partner for bridging national and global agendas.

The OSCE’s Role in UN-led Processes

The question of how and whether the OSCE should fully embrace topics already well-established on the UN agenda is a familiar one. The OSCE’s level of engagement depends greatly on the joint political will of participating States to operationalize Chapter VIII of the UN Charter and to see the OSCE play a practical role.

The OSCE has been strongly supportive of certain UN-led processes such as the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, where we continue to build the capacity of OSCE participating States to develop and implement National Action Plans that are called for in UNSCR 1325 (2000). Supporting the implementation of UNSCR 1540 (2004) on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is another example of strong OSCE engagement. In recognition of the OSCE’s role, the UN 1540 Committee Chair comes to Vienna once a year to address the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation.

More recent examples of OSCE involvement include Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), which has been a focus of the UN since at least 2005 and is now promoted through the so-called Sendai Framework endorsed by the UN General Assembly. DRR became an OSCE second dimension priority after it was pushed by the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship in 2014. A Basel Ministerial Council Decision on the topic has since facilitated the OSCE’s work towards translating global commitments into concrete actions in the field, including on

flood mitigation and wildfire management. These are activities that above all contribute to implementing SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

Often there is a considerable time lag before OSCE participating States back up their UN security-related commitments through specific OSCE mandates, and this is far from automatic. For example, developing an OSCE approach to Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R) as a potentially useful cross-dimensional concept to guide OSCE work in related areas is progressing only slowly. And efforts to find consensus on a thematic OSCE decision in follow up to UNSCR 2151(2014) on Security Sector Reform SSR have yet to succeed. Meanwhile, there is incremental engagement, but a more comprehensive effort would depend on a stronger, more specific mandate. To give further impetus to SSG/R in the context of the OSCE, the 2019 OSCE Slovak Chairmanship organized a high-level conference in September 2019 that also explored linkages with the SDGs, in particular SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

The question of OSCE engagement is perhaps most critical when it comes to climate change and security. At the global level, the Paris Accord and SDG 13 (Climate Action) are pointing the way forward. While it is clear that there is no consensus among OSCE participating States to give the OSCE a specific climate change mandate, OSCE activities are already playing a role in assessing and reducing some climate-related risks for security in the OSCE area. Since the adverse impact of climate change on security is growing all the time, greater recognition of this fact is likely to be better reflected in OSCE decision-making in the coming years.

The same is also likely to be true for the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda was adopted in 2015. We have had a few years to get used to the idea of a global framework setting the agenda on topics that are intimately linked to comprehensive security. So, it may now be the right time to consider closer alignment of OSCE priorities with the SDGs. It certainly is time to map out the extent of our existing contribution and for OSCE participating States to intensify their thinking about how the OSCE fits in and how participating States can support each other, using the OSCE to implement these universal commitments.

Conclusion

In 2019, momentum has been building for the OSCE to give greater consideration to how it fits into the global framework set by the 2030 Agenda. Discussion at OSCE events and references to the SDGs in statements made by participating States suggest that sustainable development, in its new, more comprehensive interpretation, will carry greater weight in OSCE debates and activities in the coming years. There is also a growing understanding and appreciation of the OSCE's contribution to implementing the SDGs. While some

OSCE participating States have expressed reservations, others have shown great enthusiasm for more closely and explicitly linking the OSCE's work to the implementation of the SDGs.

The OSCE's diverse efforts to strengthen security and conflict prevention are fundamental to inclusive and sustainable development. The notion that the OSCE should contribute to the 17 Goals is fully compatible with the Organization's security-focused mandate. There is a privileged relationship with SDG 16 since peace, justice, and strong institutions are central to what we do. But due to the integrated, inter-connected, and inclusive nature of the SDGs, our appraisal of them should not be partial or selective as long as they fall into the remit of the OSCE's comprehensive security approach.

Embracing the SDGs would allow us to leverage our partnerships, encourage synergies, and allow OSCE participating States to make use of the OSCE's many relevant tools as levers for sustainable development. Steps that could help overcome remaining doubts about an OSCE role in supporting this critical global agenda include a more systematic mapping of OSCE activities, a more pronounced role in monitoring and reporting, and greater emphasis on exchanging best practices at the regional level.

There now is a renewed sense of urgency and growing pressure on all stakeholders to move faster, which implies more financing, more commitments, more partnerships, and more action. As a regional organization under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE should join its partners in mobilizing for a more sustainable and safer planet.