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THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE) IN 2005

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

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OVERVIEW OF THE OSCE[1]

Created in 1973 as the "Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe" (CSCE), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) received its current name at the Budapest Summit in December 1994. The OSCE participating states, of which there are currently 55, are all the European states, the United States and Canada[2] – in other words, the entire area "from Vancouver to Vladivostok." As a result of the negotiations that began between NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries, the United States and Canada are members, as are all the countries created after the dismantling of the Soviet Union. Another 11 countries around the Mediterranean and throughout Asia joined as observers, under the title of "Partners for Co-operation." The organization sees itself as a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its region.[3] It is also recognized as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, which requires that "Members of the United Nations entering into such arrangements … shall make every effort to achieve pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies before referring them to the Security Council."[4]

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(1) For a more detailed overview of OSCE activities and components, see the *OSCE Handbook*, available in English and Russian (http://www.osce.org/item/13858.html).

(2) *Final Recommendations of the Helsinki Consultations on the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe*, Helsinki, 3 July 1973, par. 54 (http://www.osce.org/documents/mcs/1973/07/4136_en.pdf).

(3) See CSCE, *Budapest Document 1994: Towards A Genuine Partnership In A New Era*, "Budapest Summit Declaration," par. 8, 5 December 1994 (http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/osce/new/budapest-summit-declaration.html).

(4) *United Nations Charter*, Chapter VIII, art. 52, par. 2 (http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/chapter8.htm). The Security Council may also use these regional arrangements for enforcement action under its authority.

The OSCE's 2004 budget was €180 million, of which over 75% was allocated to field activities in 17 countries. The same proportion applies to the organization's staff, which totals some 1,250 individuals, in addition to the 3,000 employees seconded to field activities, who are usually paid by their country of origin.

HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZATION

In the mid-1960s, the USSR proposed the convening of a conference on problems in Europe between Warsaw Pact and NATO members, on condition that the United States and Canada were excluded – a condition that the Alliance rejected.(5) The Soviets strongly hoped for confirmation of the borders established following the World War II division of Europe. NATO members, for their part, were seeking concessions in the area of human rights, specifically freedom of movement. The climate of détente was favourable, and negotiations on convening a "Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe" got under way in 1972, leading to the signing of the *Helsinki Final Act* in 1975(6) by Leonid Brezhnev and Gerald Ford. This document confirmed the inviolability of the frontiers of European states, the political independence of the signatory states, and their commitment not to use force in settling their conflicts. It also promoted economic, scientific and technological cooperation, and committed all countries to respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. Until 1990, the commitments made by the signatory states were reviewed and refined at various meetings and conferences, which also provided an opportunity to monitor their implementation.

With the end of the Cold War, the CSCE had to redefine its role. At the November 1990 Paris Summit meeting, the organization decided to set up permanent institutions and mechanisms. The *Charter of Paris for a New Europe* was adopted at the Summit, heralding a new sense of victory that overrode the moderate tone of the documents produced at previous meetings. The Charter provided for the creation of a permanent Secretariat in Prague (moved to Vienna two years later), a Conflict Prevention Centre in Vienna, and an Office for Free Elections in Warsaw (renamed the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights), and proposed the foundation of a CSCE Parliamentary Assembly.(7)

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(5) On this point, see *Declaration of the North Atlantic Council on the future development of relations between East and West*, 4 and 5 December 1969: progress in the discussions and negotiations that relate to fundamental problems of European security "would help to ensure the success of any eventual conference in which, of course, the North American members of the Alliance would participate," par. 14 (http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c691204b.htm).

(6) *Helsinki Final Act*, 1975 (http://www.hri.org/docs/Helsinki75.html).

(7) See *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*, 1990 (http://www.hri.org/docs/Paris90.html).

Originally designed as a negotiating forum between political blocs, by 1990 the Organization had taken on the role of broker in former Soviet bloc countries' transition to democracy: "Europe is liberating itself from the legacy of the past. The courage of men and women, the strength of the will of the peoples and the power of the ideas of the *Helsinki Final Act* have opened a new era of democracy, peace and unity in Europe."(8) Several participating states saw this triumphant stance as an overly paternalistic show on the part of the Western states with regard to those countries that were failing the democratic test.

In 1994, the Budapest Summit acknowledged that the CSCE was no longer a mere Conference and agreed to change its name to "Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe." Its mechanisms continued to develop over time.

NATURE OF THE ORGANIZATION

The OSCE is not an international organization in the strict sense of international law, which is to say that its resolutions are not legally binding on the signatory countries. This may be considered a weakness, since it means that its decisions can at best have only the power of influence; but many see an advantage in this, since it means that the organization can remain flexible and an open forum where minority points of view can be freely expressed.

A. A Comprehensive Forum

The OSCE's nature is mainly attributable to its composition, in particular the presence of the United States and Canada as full members of an organization that deals with European issues. Also, even though the participating states have made commitments to promote human rights and democracy, none of them can be excluded for failing to respect those commitments unless they commit serious violations over long periods. The OSCE favours cooperative dialogue over selective admission. This enables it to keep communications open between western countries and those that have a less than exemplary democratic record – such as Belarus – on key security issues. It also fosters exchanges between the European Union and the European states in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) that are not members of the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe, which has different objectives and far stricter eligibility criteria, cannot provide such openness. Whereas

(8) *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*, 1990, p. 1.

the Council of Europe targets, above all, the harmonization of democratic practices among its participating states, the OSCE aims to foster the development of a wide geographic area that is free from conflict, regardless of the degree of democracy achieved by the participants. However, as the democratic zone started to take shape within the OSCE area and the tensions inherited from the Cold War era began to dissipate, a number of countries began to raise questions about the Organization's relevance. Russia, in particular, often accused the North American and Western European countries of using the OSCE to meddle in the internal affairs of countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States, and of applying a double standard to Western and Eastern Europe.

B. A Global and Cooperative Approach

The OSCE's resolutions and activities stem from a concept of security that is "global," in that it goes beyond the political-military framework. In the *Charter for European Security*, which was adopted at the November 1999 Istanbul Summit, heads of state and governments of the OSCE participating states agreed to "address the human, economic, political and military dimensions of security as a whole."(9) All forms of peaceful cooperation between participating countries were treated as ways to reduce the risk of conflict in the region, whether these measures took the form of promoting or defending human rights, weapons control, cultural exchanges, policing strategies, support for trade agreements, eliminating trafficking or protecting the environment. This global approach dates back to the 1973 *Helsinki Consultations*, but was redefined at the same time as the Organization's mandate in the 1990s.

The OSCE approach is also cooperative, inasmuch as the 55 states all have equal status. Decisions are taken by consensus rather than by majority vote. In extreme cases, the "consensus minus one" rule may be invoked, as in the case of a serious violation of the Organization's principles. However, this rule has been used only once, in 1992 against the former Yugoslavia, and the country was readmitted as Serbia and Montenegro after the elections in the fall of 2000.

This desire to favour mediation is an echo of the Cold War period in which the Organization was formed, and its goal of bringing the two blocs closer together. Today, this

(9) *Charter for European Security*, par. 9, in the *Istanbul Summit Declaration 1999*, pp. 1-46 (http://www.unece.org/ead/osce/osceunece/istachart99e.pdf).

spirit of cooperation is seen as a strength by some and as a weakness by others. It is a strength in the sense that the resolutions that are adopted are invested with a strong legitimacy and political realism through the terms and conditions of positions to which none of the countries in this vast area are opposed, thereby forming a starting point for numerous bilateral and multilateral negotiations. It is a weakness inasmuch as an accord in which all parties agree on one item may be blocked by a country that wants to bargain for concessions on another item. Thus, barring a major crisis situation, it is practically impossible for the OSCE to adopt a resolution that condemns one of its members.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

After the end of the Cold War, the OSCE developed its institutions and mechanisms in response to frequent and often urgent needs, and not within the framework of a strategic plan developed with a long-term outlook. This situation gave rise to various ad hoc mechanisms, which have been more or less streamlined over the years. The OSCE's institutional framework took shape after the adoption of the 1990 *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*.

A. Summits

Summits are the OSCE's highest body. Heads of state or government from OSCE participating states have met several times to define the Organization's priorities and provide high-level guidance. After the 1975 Helsinki founding summit, others were held every two or three years in the 1990s in order to solidify the OSCE's reform following the end of the Cold War. The last summit was held in Istanbul, in 1999. Since then, the permanence of the Organization's institutions has made summits less necessary, though one could be convened in the event of a major threat.

B. The Ministerial Council

In those years when no summit is held, the foreign ministers of the OSCE participating states or their representatives meet to jointly review the Organization's activities and take appropriate decisions.

C. The Permanent Council

As the OSCE's main permanent body, the Permanent Council is in charge of political consultations and decision-making. Its members, permanent representatives of the participating states, meet once a week at the Hofburg Congress Centre in Vienna.

D. The Chairmanship

The Chairmanship of the OSCE changes every year, with the "Chairman-in-Office" function rotating among the foreign ministers of the participating states. Every Chairman-in-Office is assisted by his/her predecessor and successor. The three of them together form the Troïka.

The Chairman-in-Office is vested with overall responsibility for the OSCE's executive activities, including the coordination of its current activities. As the Organization's senior diplomat, the Chairman-in-Office is supported by the Secretariat and its Secretary General. The Chairman-in-Office may designate personal or special representatives to handle specific issues or situations.

Dimitrij Rupel, Foreign Minister of Slovenia, is serving as the Chairman-in-Office for 2005. His Belgian counterpart will succeed him in 2006 and the one from Spain in 2007.

E. The Secretariat

Under the direction of the Secretary General, the Secretariat provides operational support to the Organization. Its mandate is to support OSCE field activities; maintain contacts with international and non-governmental organizations; coordinate the OSCE's economic and environmental activities; organize its politico-military activities; manage human resources and administrative and financial issues; organize language and conference services; and manage information technology services and disseminate information to the public and the media.

France's Marc Perrin de Brichambaut was appointed Secretary General in June 2005 for a three-year mandate. He succeeded Slovakia's Jàn Kubis, who had served in the position since 1999.

F. The Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC)

The FSC was established at the 1992 Helsinki Summit, and has full decision-making authority on the OSCE's politico-military dimension. The Forum meets every week in Vienna, bringing together senior representatives of the participating states and addressing issues related to arms control and confidence- and security-building. The Chairmanship changes every four months among the participating countries in alphabetical order. The Forum is assisted by the Secretariat, through its Conflict Prevention Centre.

In 2004, in addition to its responsibilities for multilateral negotiations on security issues, the FSC responded to requests for assistance from five participating states that wanted to dismantle or safely store their surplus light weapons. The Forum also monitors compliance with the commitments made by participating states at OSCE meetings.

G. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

The ODIHR is the main institution in charge of the human dimension of the OSCE's activities. Created at the 1990 Paris Summit, it is located in Warsaw, and employs approximately 100 staff. The Office is the coordination centre for the many election observation activities in which the OSCE is involved. It also sets up programs to strengthen democratic institutions in the participating states that request it, and provides support to field activities when their mandate involves the human dimension of security. It organizes numerous training workshops for government organizations, NGOs and OSCE staff. It is also in charge of the program for integrating Roma and Sinti (gypsies) into the societies in which they live.

The OSCE, through the ODIHR, carries out projects aimed at ensuring proper elections, ranging from preparation to monitoring, including the introduction of measures to support participation by women in the electoral process. Since 2004, there have been 15 observation missions, the most important of which were in the Ukraine, the United States and, for the first time in a country outside the region, Afghanistan.

H. The Economic Forum

The Economic Forum meets once each year in Prague to address issues related to the economic and environmental dimension of the OSCE's activities. Its role is relatively less important than that of the ODIHR for the human dimension, or that of the FSC for the politico-military dimension. In large part this is due to the fact that the economic and environmental

dimension is handled by the Secretariat and its Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, which has about a dozen employees. The OSCE has indicated its intention to review its activities in the economic and environmental dimension. In this regard, it adopted a *Strategic Document* in December 2003 in Maastricht. Efforts will first focus on identifying the security threats that could stem from the growing economic disparities between countries and between groups within countries.

I. The High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM)

The HCNM, whose office is located in The Hague, aims to respond, at the earliest possible opportunity, to ethnic tensions that have the potential to endanger peace, stability or friendly relations between OSCE participating states. The High Commissioner enjoys a great deal of independence, and is able to act as he or she sees fit, without requiring an official decision to intervene. Sweden's Rolf Ekéus has served in the position since 2001. He has been praised on several occasions for the effectiveness of his low-key interventions, which generate little media attention. In 2004, he intervened with the leaders of 16 countries.

J. The Representative on Freedom of the Media

Created in 1997, the Representative on Freedom of the Media is charged with observing media developments in OSCE participating states, providing early warning of non-compliance with freedom of expression, and helping participating states live up to their commitments to freedom of expression and of the media. Hungary's Miklos Haraszti has served in the position since March 2004. Last year, he analyzed the media situation in the Ukraine, Kosovo, Moldavia and Russia in connection with the tragic events in Beslan. He also made numerous representations to have libel accusations struck from criminal law.

K. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) is an independent organization, with separate funding, that exerts influence over the OSCE's activities but has no decision-making authority. More than 300 parliamentarians appointed by their respective parliaments meet twice a year to debate many issues of concern to the OSCE. Parliamentarians prepare declarations and reports and issue recommendations for their governments, parliaments and civilians on the three dimensions of the OSCE's activities. PA decisions are taken by majority vote rather than by consensus.

The PA plays a key role in observing elections in the OSCE area, and regularly sends parliamentary delegations to field activities. American Alcee L. Hastings has chaired the PA since July 2004. American Spencer Oliver has served as its Secretary General since January 1993, which marked the beginning of the Organization. He was reappointed for a five-year mandate in July 2005.

FIELD ACTIVITIES

Field activities in 17 states take up 75% of the OSCE budget. Amidst the many reforms throughout the 1990s, the Organization supported the transition to democracy of countries that had been under communist rule before the dismantling of the Eastern Bloc. Thus, it has no missions in Western Europe or in North America, a fact that Russia often raises in support of its argument that the Organization uses a double standard in its relations with participating states even though it claims to promote cooperation and egalitarianism. The OSCE's reply is that its operations stem from commitments made with the full consent and at the invitation of the countries themselves.

A. Southeastern Europe

When the CSCE began the reforms that led to the OSCE in the early 1990s, it set up the mechanisms that it needed to deploy in response to the outbreak of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The six OSCE missions in Southeastern Europe use up half of the Organization's budget. The Kosovo mission's budget alone (€42 million in 2004) is equivalent to that of the Secretariat and all the OSCE institutions.

Created in 1999, the OSCE's Kosovo mission is part of the "United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo" (UNMIK). It is responsible for democracy- and institution-building, the third of UNMIK's four pillars.[10] The OSCE also makes a key contribution to the international community's efforts in the former Yugoslavia's other republics (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Macedonia). In Albania, a more low-key presence helps the government in its reform of legislative and judicial institutions.

(10) The UN is directly responsible for civil administration (Pillar I), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is responsible for humanitarian aid (Pillar II) and the European Union is responsible for economic reconstruction (Pillar IV).

B. Eastern Europe

The OSCE's three missions in Eastern Europe (Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova) are much more modest, with a total budget of €4 million. The main focus of the mission to Belarus is the economic and environmental dimension, through the creation of a climate conducive to the development of small and medium businesses and the creation of a water quality monitoring plan. The mission to Moldova seeks to reduce tensions in Transdniestria, a Slavic region with a Russian-speaking majority, where the Rumanian-speaking population (Moldavians) has difficulty getting access to schooling. The mission to the Ukraine is geared to strengthening democratic institutions, reforming the criminal system and supporting economic development.

C. Caucasus

The OSCE mission to Georgia is the third-largest mission (after Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina). It serves as a mediator in the conflict between Georgia and its autonomous regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and provides forces to monitor the border zones. It is also active in all other aspects of its mandate: consolidating the electoral system and democratic institutions, light weapons control, anti-terrorism, training police, combating corruption and trafficking in human beings, environmental management of drinking water, and training teachers about human rights in the tension zones.

The other missions in the area, to Azerbaijan and Armenia, are not as big, but they still involve numerous activities, including organizing police forces, environmental management, combating corruption and promoting electoral reforms.

D. Central Asia

The OSCE's five missions to Central Asia are smaller, but they cover the Organization's full range of activities. In Kazakhstan, activities are focused in the environmental field, in particular the prevention of oil spills in the Caspian Sea and the raising of public awareness about the dangers in areas contaminated by nuclear testing. Similar activities are carried out in Kyrgyzstan, with a specific focus on supporting the process and follow-up for the July 2005 elections. In Tajikistan, priority was given to supporting media development in preparation for the February 2005 elections, and to a major de-mining program. In Uzbekistan, the OSCE helped authorities develop legislation aimed at facilitating interior migration, and it also trained arbitrators who were to mediate business disputes among entrepreneurs. In Turkmenistan, the government's lack of flexibility prevented the OSCE from going beyond awareness-raising activities and maintaining a dialogue with the authorities.

OSCE REFORM

Since the OSCE developed its permanent institutional mechanisms in the early 1990s, it appears to be reflecting at length on its role and relevance. This situation is largely due to the disintegration of Russia's negotiating power as the European Union and NATO spread into what it had considered its zones of influence. Sensing that its priorities were becoming increasingly less influential in the Organization's decision-making, Russia sought more equal treatment by blocking consensus and by threatening to paralyze the Organization. The increasingly complex nature of the OSCE's activities has also entailed problems: the consensus rule, which was set up to ensure the legitimacy of the Organization's political declarations, is not well suited to making decisions about its everyday management.

Moreover, there is ongoing tension between the principle established in 1973 on non-intervention in the internal affairs of a country and some of the human dimension commitments that were made in the early 1990s. With the end of the Cold War, internal conflicts have emerged as the most serious threat to European security. The most important of these conflicts occurred in Yugoslavia and in the former Warsaw Pact member countries. When violations of commitments made as part of the OSCE's human dimension were denounced, the accused states invoked the provisions of the *Helsinki Final Act* of 1975 on non-intervention in the internal affairs of another state.(11) This ambiguity was raised in 1991 in the *Moscow Document* of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, whose final text entrenched the primacy of the human dimension: "[The participating States] categorically and irrevocably declare that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the CSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned."(12) This consensual commitment in the *Moscow Document* has since come back to haunt Russia.

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(11) This founding document sets out ten "Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States," often called the Decalogue. The sixth declaration on principles begins as follows: "The participating States will refrain from any intervention, direct or indirect, individual or collective, in the internal or external affairs falling within the domestic jurisdiction of another participating State, regardless of their mutual relations" (*Helsinki Final Act*, p. 5 (http://www.hri.org/docs/Helsinki75.html#H3.1)). The seventh principle of this Decalogue contains a paragraph affirming that: "The participating States on whose territory national minorities exist will respect the right of persons belonging to such minorities to equality before the law, will afford them the full opportunity for the actual enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and will, in this manner, protect their legitimate interests in this sphere" (*ibid.*, p. 6).

(12) *Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE*, 3 October 1991, p. 2 (http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/1991/10/13995_en.pdf).

In many of its activities, the OSCE is increasingly involved with other international organizations. The European Union's eastward expansion, as well as that by NATO and the Council of Europe (which includes 46 of the OSCE's 55 participating states), sometimes creates serious overlaps that raise questions about the relevance of the OSCE. If NATO can more effectively undertake measures to strengthen security, why ask the OSCE? The same applies to the European Union's economic activities and the Council of Europe's democracy-building. The OSCE's main asset remains its composition and the realistic nature of its comprehensive approach, which guarantees open lines of communication with the participating states. This approach certainly does not provide a guarantee of democratic compliance, but it is an essential condition for maintaining a security zone.

A. The "Panel of Eminent Persons"

Tensions were exacerbated in 2004 when the Sofia Ministerial Council was unable to adopt a general political declaration, mainly because of Russia's objection to the draft declaration on the situation in the Ukraine – even though the draft had been approved by the Ukrainian government itself – and on the closure of Russian military bases in Georgia and Moldova.(13)

In response to its continuing structural problems, the Sofia Ministerial Council set up a "Panel of Eminent Persons" to propose a longer-term vision of the OSCE's strategic development, but mainly to respond to Russia's demands without having the Organization fall hostage. The Panel's report, entitled *Common Purpose*,(14) was tabled before the Permanent Council on 27 June 2005. A consultation process was then initiated to prepare a draft project for reform, which will be submitted for adoption at the Ljubljana Ministerial Council in December 2005.

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(13) The Russian Federation has often made comments suggesting that it was threatening to withdraw from the OSCE, which would deprive the Organization of one of its main sources of legitimacy. In reaction to the Declaration by the Chairman-in-Office at the December 2004 Ministerial Council, it stated that: "the Russian party would like to point out that, given the thematic and geographic divisions that continue to pervade the Organization's activities and the double standard commonly applied, the question of the OSCE's usefulness and its ability to respond appropriately to modern challenges and satisfy the interests and real needs of the participating states is becoming more pressing then ever before" [translation]. See the *Declaration of the Delegation of the Russian Federation*, 12th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Sofia, 6 and 7 December 2004, p. 75 (http://194.8.63.155/documents/mcs/2005/02/4324_en.pdf).

(14) *Common Purpose: Towards a More Effective OSCE*, 27 June 2005 (http://www.osce.org/documents/cio/2005/06/15432_en.pdf).

The mandate of the Panel of Eminent Persons was to "review the effectiveness of the Organization, its bodies and structures and provide an assessment in view of the challenges ahead. The Panel will make recommendations on measures in order to meet these challenges effectively."(15) Overall, the nature of the problems faced by the Organization, and the OSCE's strengths, are clearly described in the Panel's report. However, the recommendations either remain highly general, making it difficult to assess their actual impact, or involve administrative reforms that, while significant, do not reflect the original concern that the Organization's very existence may be at risk.

The report contains three parts: the first one analyzes the comparative advantages of the Organization, the second reviews the relations between the three dimensions of the OSCE's concept of security (politico-military; economic and environmental; and human), and the third proposes some appropriate structural changes.

The report outlines the key characteristics that distinguish the OSCE from other organizations in Europe: its broader and inclusive "Vancouver to Vladivostok" composition; its global approach to security; and its field activities. Its main recommendations include the following:

- strengthen relations between the OSCE and other international organizations, in particular the UN and the Council of Europe, in areas where the OSCE can add value;
- create linkages among the activities and structures related to each of the three dimensions of security;
- refocus activities in the economic and environmental dimension to facilitate the channelling of financial resources from better-funded international organizations, rather than setting up autonomous projects for which the OSCE does not have sufficient resources;
- standardize election monitoring procedures and develop the expertise acquired by the OSCE in this area;
- acquire a legal status that would enable the OSCE to become a fully fledged international organization;
- develop clear long-term priorities and thereby strengthen the visibility and responsibilities of the Secretary General in operational support, especially field activities;

(15) OSCE Ministerial Council, *Establishment of a Panel of Eminent Persons on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE*, Decision No. 16/04, Sofia, 7 December 2004.

- preserve the consensus rule and identify countries that block consensus;
- refocus the Ministerial Council on political declarations and away from the analysis of reports and the resolution of current problems, which the Permanent Council could look after; and
- improve the effectiveness of field activities, especially with regard to: the clarity of the mandates agreed with the host country; accountability; and transparency in the selection of Heads of Mission.

Participating states' preliminary reactions to the report were very reserved, but quite favourable. The results of the fall 2005 consultations will show how significant the measures submitted to the December Ministerial Council will be.

B. The Report to the Parliamentary Assembly

In parallel with the work of the Panel of Eminent Persons, the OSCE's PA, together with the Swiss Institute for World Affairs, conducted its own work on mapping out the Organization's future, and held a colloquium in Washington in June 2005.(16) The Panel's report mentions the PA only once, assigning it a modest role as a vehicle for raising awareness about OSCE activities in the national parliaments of participating states. Naturally, the PA's report takes a very different approach to its role; but it reaches similar conclusions on most of the other issues, including that of enhancing the role of the Secretary General.

The most distinctive aspect of the report is its insistence on the loss of the OSCE's political importance in the eyes of the participating states. This observation is illustrated by the decrease in the position levels of representatives on the Ministerial Council. The report dismisses criticisms about the expansion of the human dimension compared to the politico-military and economic and environmental ones, but nonetheless proposes an increase in activities in the latter two areas, as long as this is not to the detriment of the human dimension. The report recommends that:

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(16) *Report: Colloquium on "The Future of the OSCE,"* Washington, 5 and 6 June 2005 (http://www.osce.org/documents/pa/2005/06/15378_en.pdf). A report submitted in 2003 by Canada's Clifford Lincoln, when he was serving as Rapporteur of the OSCE's PA General Committee on Political Affairs and Security, provides a great deal more information on the debates that could not be included in the Panel and PA reports. Many of the conclusions in the PA report were likely based on Mr. Lincoln's 2003 report, which can be found on-line (http://www.oscepa.org/admin/getbinary.asp?fileid=204).

- the consensus rule be modified for decisions related to budget, personnel and administration;
- the PA be given a greater role in certain areas of the OSCE's decision-making, including approval of the budget; and
- staff involved in field activities show more professionalism.

The report was ratified by the PA in July 2005, but did not receive much debate.

THE OSCE AND CANADA

Canada has been an active participant in the OSCE since the beginning. It is especially appreciative of the link that has been made in the Organization between issues of regional security and the human dimension, in particular good governance and human rights, electoral standards, gender equality, freedom of the media, the rule of law and the fight against discrimination, intolerance and hatred. Canada also shares the OSCE's security objectives, specifically in combating terrorism and traffic in persons, curbing the proliferation of light weapons, and reducing the vulnerability of border and policing infrastructures. Canada has an annual budget of $17.6 million for OSCE activities.

Canada has made significant contributions to election observation activities, notably in the Ukraine and the Central Asian states. In 2004, the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada participated in meetings on the development of electoral standards. Canada's contribution to the OSCE also includes support for:

- OSCE policies on integrating gender equality into its policies;
- the development of a policy on anti-terrorism, and de-mining and military monitoring activities, including the adoption of a Canadian initiative for exchanging information on anti-personnel mines and explosive devices left behind after a conflict;
- the February 2005 conference to review the 1992 Open Skies Treaty, allowing for observation flights to monitor participating states' compliance with military commitments; and
- the funding of programs for Bosnia, Georgia, Tajikistan, and Serbia and Montenegro, through a framework agreement between the Canadian International Development Agency and the OSCE.

However, Canada was critical of the following aspects:

- Russia's stance of blocking the decision-making process, notably in regard to passing the budget, to express its discontent with the OSCE's actions on the human dimension;

- the fragmentation of OSCE actions against discrimination by targeting Judaism, Islam and a few other specific communities, rather than taking the more global approach favoured by Canada towards all potentially vulnerable communities; and

- Canada's increased contribution to the unified budget on the heels of the reductions granted to other participating states.

In the months ahead, Canada will be keeping a close eye on Russia's reactions to the reform proposals, in particular the Russian proposal to integrate the OSCE into the Council of Europe, which would exclude the North American countries and guarantee a quasi-monopoly of Russian influence over the Central Asian states. Canada will also have to adopt a clear stance on the increasingly open pressure being exerted by the Council of Europe to take over activities in areas where there is overlap, in particular the election observation missions.

CONCLUSION

The OSCE's future will largely depend on its ability to promote its competitive advantages over the Council of Europe, NATO and the European Union on security issues that are shared by the 55 participating states. This means finding an answer to the question: "With regard to security, what would happen between Vancouver and Vladivostok if the OSCE no longer existed?" The answer, whether or not it would justify the continued existence of the Organization, will certainly depend on the value that the participating states put on the composition of the Organization. Will they consider that there is merit to maintaining a single forum that brings together Europe, Eurasia and North America – in other words, the entity (with the exception of Australia and New Zealand) commonly referred to as the "West"?

APPENDIX

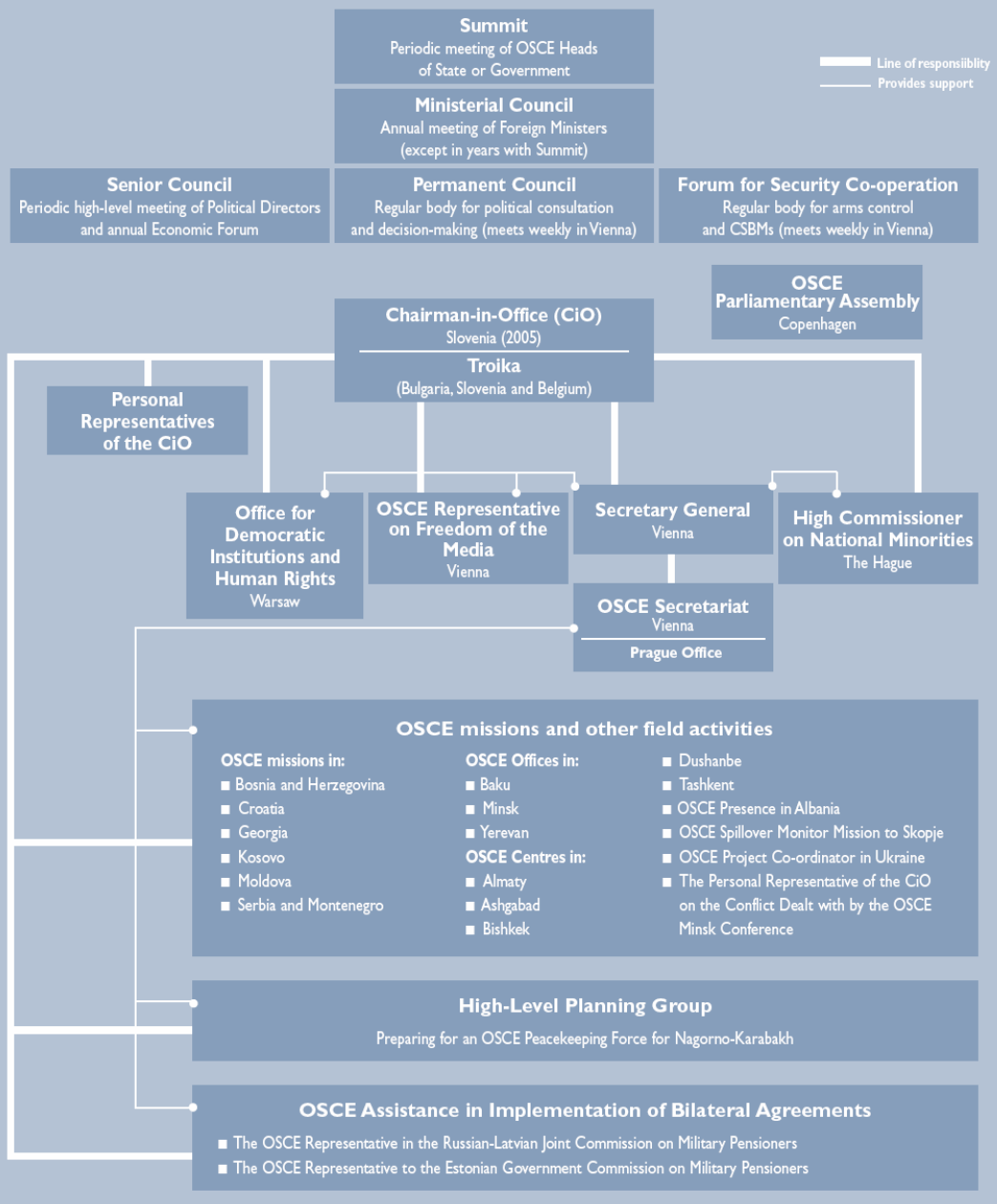
OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES AND ORGANIZATION CHART

APPENDIX

OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES AND ORGANIZATION CHART[1]

(1) Source: OSCE, *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, p. 3 (list of OSCE participating states) and p. 4 (organization chart), http://www.osce.org/publications/sg/2004/11/13554_53_en.pdf.

STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONS



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