

What concrete reforms for OSCE do you have in mind?

To sum it up, we need to revitalise, reform and rebalance the 55-nation Organization and ensure it is more responsive to the needs of all participating States. Look at how fast the world out there is changing. The OSCE has to move at the same pace, to adapt to the new challenges.

We have established a Panel of Eminent Persons to make recommendations about the future direction of the OSCE. As Chairman-in-Office, I aim to ensure that they will give a new impetus to political dialogue and provide a strategic vision for the Organization in the twenty-first century.

But in order to make all of the above happen we urgently need to reach agreement on a 2005 budget and scales of contribution for the participating States. The OSCE has an impressive list of achievements to its credit and a promising future. In the 30 years since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, the OSCE has made Europe a better place and has done a lot in recent years for Central Asia. But it is up to all 55 countries to ensure it remains the effective instrument it was designed to be.

In what way the reorientation would make the OSCE different from what it is now? How do you plan to go about the reorientation process?

It is not about turning around or reinventing the OSCE, or abandoning the things we have done until now. It is about strengthening the Organization and making it more effective and responsive to the needs of participating States.

In part this can be done by paying more attention to issues such as fighting terrorism, developing a new border security concept and combating human trafficking. In part it is about finding a better balance between the different dimensions of security - the politico-military, the human dimension and the economic and environmental dimension.

The Slovenian Chairmanship has been closely following the discussion on reforming the OSCE and the criticism voiced by the Russian Federation and some other CIS countries about the work of the Organization. I have read carefully the Moscow Declaration and the Astana Address. During my meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Moscow in February, I was encouraged by the commitment of the Russian Federation to making the OSCE more effective. I am confident that the leaders of Central Asia will contribute concrete proposals as well.

During your tenure, what would be your agenda for Central Asia? Would there be a universal agenda for the entire region or would you rather follow a country-to-country approach?

We shall try to look at each country individually as each Central Asian State has to deal with its particular challenges. Of course we will continue to encourage all of the States in the region to co-operate with each other as this is absolutely necessary in today's world.

I visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in mid-February and will return to the region to visit the other OSCE countries – Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – in April.

In all Central Asian countries, the OSCE offers to provide support in the holding of free and fair elections, to continue our work in all three dimensions and to support the OSCE Centres in their daily work. For example, Slovenia very much supports the OSCE Academy in Bishkek and the Police Assistance Programme in Kyrgyzstan. We will look into possibilities for assisting with the Anti-Mine Action in Tajikistan.

Migration is another important issue. On 24-25 January the OSCE organised a preparatory seminar for the 13th OSCE Economic Forum, which took place in Almaty, dealing with migration from an economic, environmental and security perspective. Suggestions for possible OSCE action in areas such as awareness campaigns, information exchange and scientific research will be followed up.

What, specifically, are the obstacles hindering more fruitful co-operation between OSCE and Central Asia? Where would you draw a line between perceptions and realities?

I would not pose the question this way as it makes it sound as if the OSCE is on one side and the Central Asian countries on another. That is not the case. All 55 participating States together make up this organisation. The question should therefore be rather how we can better involve the Central Asian States in the OSCE's work.

As you are probably aware there are different ideas for reforming our organization. The Slovenian Chairmanship will try to bring the different perceptions closer together so that in the end we shall have an organization where all the 55 participating States feel "at home".

We have OSCE Centres in all five Central Asian States, so the OSCE is highly visible. That is a positive thing. The Centres are all there at the invitation of the respective host countries and they try to be of assistance to governments and civil society. They all carry out tailor-made programmes according to their respective mandates.

All OSCE countries have their own interests. There are country-specific issues and there are regional concerns. Some problems, such as environmental pollution or human trafficking, will not be solved overnight and will require sustained efforts over the long term. The OSCE can make a significant difference, provided all 55 countries agree and provide the necessary political will and the resources.

It is normal that countries with differing interests should disagree at times. Our Organization provides a forum where these differences can be discussed and overcome.

What do you expect the Central Asian states to do? And, how would you ensure that they do it?

The Central Asia states, like all participating States, have signed up to a number of OSCE commitments – for example on free and fair elections, freedom of the media and fighting terrorism and human trafficking. We expect them to live up to those standards. Of course we understand that modernisation is needed in a number of areas and that change can take time, but we are ready to help in tackling the various issues. This is not about countries “west of

Vienna” lecturing countries “east of Vienna.” It is about all of us working together, sharing experiences and learning from each other.

So if you ask me about how we shall try to promote OSCE standards during our Chairmanship, I would stress that involvement of the Central Asian States in our work is vital. Slovenia cannot reform the OSCE alone, but we hope to provide a lead and encouragement to all our partners in working constructively to make the most of this valuable institution. The Central Asian countries have an important role to play.

What is the scale on which you would ultimately judge your success, or failure, as the OSCE CiO?

We do not want to set unrealistic goals and raise the expectations to high. We are fully aware of the difficult tasks ahead. With unbiased approach in considering interests of individual countries, we will strive to find ways to reach consensus to overcome issues that have arisen within the OSCE in recent years.

Slovenia has taken over the chairmanship of the Organization in a difficult period in its history. A successful chairmanship is a goal much harder to achieve than in the "golden" nineties of previous century. Making steps to overcome the current polarisation within the Organization and prevent new dividing lines from opening up would be a result that Slovenia could be proud of. We will certainly push for this to happen.