

## **The OSCE and a New Culture of Dialogue<sup>©</sup>**

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The year 2005 will be remembered as a year of anniversaries. Many of us in Moscow remember taking part in the May 9 celebrations marking the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II. However, this was also the year of the 30th anniversary of the signing of the historic Helsinki Final Act, which started the process of postwar detente and led to the establishment of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In this sense it is fair to ask why it is that despite this jubilee the OSCE failed to adopt the Political Declaration at the Ministerial Council in Ljubljana in December, for a third time in a row. After all, the OSCE declaration represents a politically binding statement by the foreign ministers of the 55 participating states of the regional security organization that spans the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Was it not a time of and for consensus?

In answering the question it is important to recall that when Slovenia took over the yearlong OSCE chairmanship on Jan. 1, 2005, the organization was in a deep political crisis. At the regular ambassadorial meetings of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna there was talk of countries belonging to different "blocs," and the general level of distrust was palpable. This breakdown in the culture of dialogue in the organization, where decisions are based on consensus of all the participating states, was most clearly reflected in the fact that the OSCE entered the year without an agreed budget. For this reason, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, in assuming his duties as the chairman-in-office of the organization, announced a three-R agenda: revitalize, reform and rebalance. If we look back at what was achieved, we can see that he delivered on his promise.

The OSCE has entered the new year with an agreed budget and scales of contribution. In Ljubljana, the participating states also adopted a decision on increasing the effectiveness of the OSCE. This document takes into account the results of the work done by members of a panel who were appointed by the Slovenian chairman at the beginning of the year and who presented him their report -- "Common Purpose: Toward a More Effective OSCE" -- on June 27. The decision also charts a road map for reform of the organization in the future. In addition, there is now consensus on holding a seminar on military doctrines early in 2006 and a clear understanding of the potential and enduring value of the OSCE's economic dimension. Moreover, the organization has a new secretary general, as well as a new coordinator of economic and environmental activities.

Of course, the rebalancing of the work of the organization cannot be achieved at the expense of any of its three historic "baskets." This would undermine one of the hallmarks of the OSCE, which is the only regional security organization that takes a holistic approach to security, including political-military, economic and environmental, and human rights areas in its activities. I would therefore like to point out the important role played by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE in the run-up to the July presidential elections in Kyrgyzstan. The activities of ODIHR helped assure the transparency and legitimacy of the process, thus contributing greatly to stabilizing the situation. The OSCE engagement in the country also highlighted the fact that it is the only regional security organization with established and comprehensive field presence. This, combined with its innate openness and historic flexibility, will assure its continued importance and viability in the future. It is no doubt for this reason that many participating states are interested in heading the OSCE, including Kazakhstan, which has already announced its candidacy for 2009.

When contemplating the results of this year, one comes to the conclusion that OSCE chairmanship requires a constant cultivation of the culture of dialogue and dialogue between cultures. In a way, it could be described as an exercise in Zen Buddhist diplomacy, where sometimes the path is the goal. In this sense, I think we did our job well. Throughout the year, we encouraged an open, frank and positive debate within the organization. We have also bridged important divides in differing positions between participating states East and West of Vienna, and we are handing over the leadership of the OSCE to our Belgian colleagues in good shape.

Nevertheless, many challenges remain. Foremost among these is the persistent dissonance in the East-West dialogue within the organization. The failure of participating states to adopt the Political Declaration in Ljubljana, on account of their inability to reach a compromise wording on the implementation of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty and the Istanbul Commitments of 1999, in particular as they relate to the withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldova, serves as a clear reflection of this unfortunate reality. Instead, the Slovenian foreign minister circulated the so-called chairman's statement, which summed up the proposed content of the Political Declaration but is not politically binding.

Thus it sometimes seems that the more we talk of no new dividing lines in Europe, the more we are threatened by them. It was precisely for this reason that throughout the year Slovenian chairmanship paid special attention to the concerns expressed about the work of the OSCE by nine presidents and eight foreign ministers of the Commonwealth of Independent States in the Moscow Declaration and the Astana Address. We continually worked to address the situation out of a sincere belief that there is so much more that unites us than divides us, in particular the foundations upon which the OSCE was built. I have to point out that in these efforts we found a reliable partner in Russia, whose diplomats lived up to their responsible role as the heirs of the co-origina-tors of the Helsinki process, especially during the more tense situations of our chairmanship.

Of course, we would have wished for an even more active re-engagement of the participating states within the OSCE. Such renewed partnership would also have had concrete consequences for the work of the organization in a number of areas, including the so-called "frozen conflicts" and the situations in regions such as southeastern Europe and Central Asia. In this connection I want to emphasize that despite the vast cultural diversity across the OSCE lands, there is no excuse for systematic failure to live up to the responsibilities to which the participating states have committed themselves by accepting the organization's mission. Even if within the OSCE the path is often as important as the goal, participation cannot be a free ride. It is above all an effort at sharing responsibilities and commitments. As Foreign Minister Rupel pointed out in his concluding statement at the Ljubljana Ministerial Council: "Tolerating grave breaches undermines the credibility of the OSCE in the eyes of those who count on us most; namely, our citizens. If we lose their ear and their trust, we've lost our cause and purpose."

I hope the renewed OSCE can go forward in a spirit of solidarity and partnership to improve our collective security through cooperation. We can and should strengthen the culture of dialogue with a view to adopting the Political Declaration before the end of this new and challenging year.

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