



United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 1: Enhancing the role and further strengthening capabilities of the OSCE executive structures, Part 1: Effectiveness of the Secretariat and institutions

As delivered by Winsome Packer, Representative of the Helsinki Commission
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The United States sees this Review Conference and the upcoming Summit in Astana as a chance to make the OSCE an even more relevant and effective organization. This requires taking a look at how the OSCE has been able to meet the challenges of the past, and discussing how we can strengthen its ability to assist us all in addressing both ongoing and future challenges as well as emerging threats. Does this organization have the capacity to address these, and as important, do the participating States individually and collectively have the political will to make full use of the OSCE? Can the organization respond efficiently, effectively and in a timely manner to crises in the OSCE region, in fulfillment of its core mandate to preserve and strengthen our common security?

Effectiveness means getting the right job done, at the right time, and should not be viewed in a narrow sense as administrative reform of the organization. Rather, it should be understood in its totality as a number of elements – first and foremost faithfulness to the principles enshrined in the Final Act, the Charter of Paris and other OSCE documents. While today we do not intend to repeat the proposals we made in the framework of the Corfu Process, we are convinced that they would significantly contribute to increasing the overall effectiveness of the OSCE. In operational terms, are we prepared to match the mandates we confer upon the organization with the human and other resources necessary to accomplish these tasks? In this regard, our collective record is mixed.

We do not object to genuine efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the OSCE; we welcome them. As noted above, we will continue to pursue proposals that strengthen the capacity of the organization. But let there be no mistake: the United States will not consent to any “reforms” that are little more than a smokescreen for attempts to constrain or even undermine the very institutions whose task is to assist us in implementing our common commitments.

Internal reform was a major focus of the OSCE’s work from 2004 to 2006. We believe that the decisions adopted in Brussels in 2006 provide an adequate institutional and structural framework for carrying out the OSCE’s activities. We see no compelling need to reopen this discussion.

The report of the Panel of Eminent Persons was useful in highlighting not only aspects key to the OSCE's success, such as its ability to adjust to a changing security environment, but also identifying fundamental issues - including a lack of political will - that inhibit the organization's effectiveness. The Panel's recommendations were carefully considered by Ministers in Ljubljana and Brussels, and a number of decisions were taken as a result. The report had a number of ideas upon which consensus could not be reached then, and upon which there remain substantive differences. It has served as a source of useful ideas, and we are certainly willing to consider specific proposals made on the basis of the report's recommendations, but see no need for yet another comprehensive review of these proposals.

We don't see a particular need to strengthen the role of the Secretary General, or to change the balance between the Secretary General and the Chairmanship. We discussed this subject at length in 2006 and agreed to give the Secretary General more responsibility for day to day operations, as well as for internal coordination and the unified budget. We believe the current balance is logical and useful, and see no need to revisit this issue.

ODIHR's and the OSCE PA's election observation criteria and methodology have been continuously refined over the years, represent the highest standard, and have served as a model for other organizations. We believe that the work ODIHR carried out under Ministerial Council Decision No. 17/05, including its November 2006 report, fulfilled the recommendations contained in the Eminent Persons report in this respect. If participating States are interested in enhancing the effectiveness of ODIHR's work on election observation, we would recommend that they work closely together with the ODIHR experts to ensure follow-up to and implementation of recommendations emanating from election observation reports.

We will address the management issues raised by the Secretary General, as well as the topic of legal personality, at later sessions of the Review Conference.

We fully support and commend the work of the ODIHR, the HCNM, the RFOM, and the field missions, all of which we view as central to the OSCE's efforts to ensure long-term security and stability, including through promotion of full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. To succeed in carrying out their mandates, they must be allowed to take autonomous action, whether quietly or publicly as they see fit, without fear of incurring the wrath of any one or more delegations in Vienna opposed to their stability- and democracy-building efforts.

The Secretariat's role and areas of expertise are important in supporting these and other elements of the organization in keeping with the OSCE's comprehensive, cross-dimensional approach to security. Knowing the inherent nature of bureaucracies, we should be firm in maintaining a streamlined Secretariat and defining its role so that it does not become a power of sufficient magnitude to act against the will of the participating States and assume political responsibilities of its own.

As no participating State is immune from the effects of the global economic downturn, we cannot ignore the realities of limited resources. The United States has made a significant

investment in human resources and financial support for OSCE and we remain committed to the important work undertaken by this organization. But money alone is not the answer.

The path to strengthening the OSCE ultimately lies in perhaps the scarcest resource – political will for the kinds of change that naturally flow from the commitments all of our countries have agreed to at the highest political levels. The principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act are as relevant and necessary today as they were thirty-five years ago.

The Police Assistance Group for Kyrgyzstan is an example. If there had been the political will to deploy the group immediately after the ethnic violence in June, it could have provided an early confidence building measure among the local population. Instead, the long delay allowed some to use it for their own political purposes. After the recent election, we continue to support the quick deployment of the PAG to serve its original purpose to rebuild trust between the police and minority citizens, as decided by all 56 OSCE participating States in answering the request for assistance.

As experience has shown, the gaps in implementation of our commitments – growing gaps in some participating States – will not be remedied by projects and programs alone. No amount of institutional tinkering will suffice. Only when there is a renewed commitment in capitals to integrate OSCE principles into our policies at home and in our relations with one another will our organization be truly strengthened.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.