

The Asian Dimension of the OSCE

One of the characteristics of the OSCE in the year 2000 under the Austrian Chairmanship was the special attention given to Asian states and regions. This interest included the Central Asian participating States, the Asian co-operation partner countries ("partners for co-operation"), whose number has increased from one to three, as well as the only Asian security institution, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). If one were to summarize the related initiatives, activities and policies, it appears justified to speak of an "Asian dimension of the OSCE".

How Many Dimensions Are There in the OSCE?

Since its origins in the CSCE, the OSCE has included a series of areas in its work, which were developed originally as "baskets" and since the mid-nineties have been called "dimensions".

It is widely believed that at the beginning of the CSCE, there were only the three well-known or even famous "baskets" - security ("basket I"), economics, science and technology and the environment ("basket II"), and humanitarian and other fields ("basket III").

However, this is only partially correct. This division had already been agreed upon on 8 June 1973 at the end of the "Helsinki Consultations".² Today, incidentally, the three dimensions are defined as follows with a special emphasis on the comprehensive OSCE security concept:

- the politico-military dimension,
- the economic and environmental dimension and
- the human dimension.

In addition, the "official" order of the three dimensions no longer corresponds to that of the Helsinki baskets: The human dimension is at the head of the list - as is the case in the "Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe"; this is followed by the politico-military dimension; and the economic and environ-

1 The author is the Austrian National Co-ordinator for the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and was Deputy Head of the Permanent Mission of Austria to the OSCE during the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship. The statements in this text are the personal opinions of the author and do not necessarily conform with those of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

2 Final Recommendations of the Helsinki Consultations, Helsinki, 8 June 1973, in: Arie Bloed (Ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Analysis and Basic Documents, 1972-1993*, Dordrecht/Boston/London 1993, pp. 121-140.

mental dimension concludes the list.³ This change in hierarchy or value can apparently be attributed to the fact that "respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law is at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security".⁴

However, let us return to the 1973 Helsinki "baskets". They had already been given different designations in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act⁵ than appeared in the Final Recommendations: i.e. confidence-building measures, security and disarmament; economics, science and technology and environment; humanitarian and other fields.

However, in the Helsinki Final Act there is another dimension, between the second and the third basket, that is given equal consideration: "Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean". Thus, the "Mediterranean dimension" of the CSCE/OSCE has been in existence since the beginning of the Organization.

The basis for the Mediterranean dimension is the conviction that European security cannot be considered and managed comprehensively without including security in the entire Mediterranean region. Some of the participating States have advocated this view very fervently since the beginning of the CSCE and have to date upheld the OSCE's interest in the Mediterranean dimension.⁶

As a result, not only have Mediterranean issues been mentioned repeatedly in all significant OSCE documents including the Charter for European Security of 19 November 1999, but ten meetings on Mediterranean issues have already been organized up to now⁷ and participation rights and opportunities for co-operation with the present six "Mediterranean partners for co-operation"⁸ have been increased.

On 16 March 2000, the OSCE Permanent Council adopted the regional strategy for South Eastern Europe, i.e. a second geographic dimension alongside the three subject dimensions.⁹ What was finally given the designation "regional strategy" - after negotiations proving more difficult than expected - the Permanent Council had originally called the "regional dimension". On 1 July

3 Cf. Charter for European Security signed by the Heads of State or Government of the OSCE participating States on 19 November 1999 at the OSCE Summit in Istanbul. Reprinted in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (Ed.), OSCE Yearbook 2000, Baden-Baden 2001, pp. 425-443.

4 Ibid., p. 431.

5 Final Act of Helsinki, Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Helsinki, 1 August 1975, in: Bloed (Ed.), cited above (Note 2), pp. 141-217.

6 For more information on the Mediterranean dimension: Elizabeth Abela/Monika Wohlfeld, The Mediterranean Security Dimension, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (Ed.), OSCE Yearbook 1999, Baden-Baden 2000, pp. 435-446.

7 The last meeting was on "Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) and Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs): the OSCE experience and its relevance for the Mediterranean" and took place on 30-31 October 2000 in Portorož (Slovenia).

8 Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia.

9 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Permanent Council, Decision No. 344, Regional Strategy for South Eastern Europe, PC.DEC/344 of 16 March 2000.

1999, the Permanent Council passed the decision to place the Stability Pact under the auspices of the OSCE and in this connection requested the OSCE Chairman-in-Office "to promote further the development of the regional dimension of the OSCE's efforts in South Eastern Europe (...)".¹⁰

The regional strategy for South Eastern Europe is based on the considerations of the former Heads of two OSCE missions in the spring 1999: Robert L. Barry, then Head of the Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the second largest OSCE mission, and Tim Guldemann, then Head of the OSCE Mission to Croatia, the third largest mission of the Organization. The starting point for these considerations was, on the one hand, the lack of communication between OSCE missions, also when they were active in areas that were only separated from each other by a state border, and on the other, the existence of developed and positively evaluated programmes, which could be useful for neighbouring states and regions rather than forcing the missions in neighbouring countries to newly create and develop these activities.¹¹

Already during the negotiations on a regional strategy for South Eastern Europe, there were certain voices encouraging the establishment of an "OSCE regional dimension" with sub-chapters at least on South Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

When describing the OSCE dimensions, one must add that the Romanian OSCE Chair, during the year 2001, moved to introduce a so-called "spiritual dimension". In this connection, on 2 April 2001 in Vienna, a panel discussion took place within the framework of the Permanent Council on the topic "Spiritual and Ethical Values - Factors of Peace and Stability: Is there a Role for the OSCE?".¹² The Romanian Chair announced after this meeting, they would pursue this initiative further.

Central Asia

In this section, a special emphasis will be placed on those elements affecting Central Asia, which can be integrated in a targeted, planned policy for the treatment of Asian topics on the whole, i.e., the "Asian dimension" of the OSCE. The Central Asia policy of the Austrian OSCE Chair built on the ideas and initiatives of the 1999 Norwegian Chair, on the concepts and prospects of Wilhelm Höynck, which he had developed during the period he was OSCE Secretary General and later as the Personal Representative of the

10 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Permanent Council, Decision No. 306, PC.DEC/306 of 1 July 1999.

11 More on this regional strategy by the same author: Die OSZE-Regionalstrategie für Südosteuropa [The OSCE Regional Strategy for South-Eastern Europe], in: Vierteljahresschrift für Sicherheit und Frieden (S+F) 4/2000, pp. 312-319.

12 Cf. CIO/GAL/9/01 of 20 March 2001.

OSCE Chairman-in-Office¹³ as well as on speeches of the Central Asian Heads of State at the Istanbul Summit. In particular, it included the following:

- the appointment of OSCE Secretary General Ambassador Ján Kubiš to the position of Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for Central Asia because of his knowledge of the region, which he gathered in particular during the period he was Head of the United Nations Mission of Observers to Tajikistan (UNMOT);
- the visit of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office to all Central Asian participating States (28 May to 2 June 2000)¹⁴ and meetings with all the presidents and foreign ministers as well as representatives of civil society from each country;
- regular meetings between the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office with individual heads of state and/or all of them jointly or the foreign ministers of the Central Asian participating States (the so-called "Tashkent mechanism") as well as their appearances before the Permanent Council in Vienna;
- visits to Central Asia by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoep, as well as the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Gérard Stoudmann;
- regular meetings twice a year of the Heads of OSCE field presences from Central Asia including the Austrian Chair and the OSCE Secretariat;
- opening further field offices in Tajikistan (Khujand) and Kyrgyzstan (Osh);
- visits to all Central Asian participating States by the Heads of Permanent Missions of the OSCE participating States (9-14 July);
- the publication of a continuously updated edition of the "Overview of OSCE Events in Central Asia for the year 2000"¹⁵ by the Chair;
- a meeting of international organizations, international financial organizations and bilateral donor countries on Central Asia organized by the OSCE (Vienna, 18 July 2000);
- the OSCE regional seminar of "Global Environmental Law: Interpretation, Integration, and Implementation" (Almaty, 13-15 September 2000);
- the conference jointly organized by the OSCE Chair and the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODCCP) on "Enhancing Security and Stability in Central Asia: An Integrated Ap-

13 See also: Wilhelm Höynck, OSCE activities in Central Asia, in: Helsinki Monitor 4/2000, pp. 19-28, as well as his article: A Sustainable Stabilization Policy in and for Central Asia, in: OSCE Yearbook 2000, cited above (Note 3), pp. 205-216.

14 For report see CIO.GAL/33/00 of 8 June 2000.

15 Thus e.g. CIO/GAL/5/00/Rev.1 of 3 May 2000.

proach to Counter Drugs, Organized Crime and Terrorism" (Tashkent, 19-29 October 2000);¹⁶

- the second Central Asian media conference on the topic "Present and Future of the Mass Media in Central Asia", organized by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in co-operation with the OSCE Mission to Tajikistan (Dushanbe, 13-14 November 2000);
- the conference on "Comprehensive Security in Central Asia - Exchanging Experiences between the OSCE and Asia" on 11 and 12 December 2000 in Tokyo as a comprehensive conclusion to a series of sectional conferences of various institutions on Central Asia, including the Tashkent conference on drugs, the Almaty economic seminar, the Dushanbe conference on the media, the EAPC seminar on security and stability in Central Asia (Bishkek, 16-17 November 2000) and the international seminar on "Religion, Security and Stability in Central Asia" organized under the auspices of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (Almaty, 26-28 October 2000).¹⁷

The ASEAN Regional Forum

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is the only permanent multilateral institution dealing with security issues in the Asia-Pacific region. It was established in 1994. Currently there are 23 participants consisting of the - now ten - ASEAN member states as well as the ASEAN "dialogue partners" covering East Asia, Oceania, South Asia (only India) and also Russia, the US and the EU. The founding members are Australia, Brunei, Canada, China, the EU (Presidency), Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, the US and Vietnam. The inclusion of Cambodia (1995), India and Burma (1996) as well as Mongolia (1997) and North Korea (2000) has brought membership to a total of 23 countries to date.

The Forum meets once a year at the foreign ministerial level in the country holding the chair at the end of its year in office in July. Between these main conferences Intersessional Support Groups (ISG) and Intersessional Meetings (ISM) take place, which are oriented towards specific topics and problems and are dissolved once their task has been completed. There is also no permanent secretariat. The chairmanship alternates between exclusively the ASEAN member states (in alphabetical order), ISGs are under a joint chairmanship comprised of an ASEAN member state and a dialogue partner.

The ARF is truly a "forum" in the sense coined by ASEAN. Accordingly, it emphasizes motivation and not management. It follows the principle of

16 Documents in CIO.GAL/105/00 of 24 October 2000.

17 Meetings on similar topics took place on 27 and 28 April 2000 in Bishkek on "Democracy and Religion" as well as on 19 and 20 June in Vienna on "Central Asia and Islam".

"equal participation", however ASEAN is explicitly recognized in its role as the main driving force. Decisions are taken by consensus after careful and extensive consultations.

The ARF thus exhibits a series of similarities in structure and content with the (early) CSCE.

During the Thai ARF Chair (mid-1999 to mid-2000), the institution increasingly sought contacts at and co-operation with the United Nations as well as regional organizations (OSCE, OAS) and started to develop them.

On the OSCE side, the then Austrian Foreign Minister and Chairman-in-Office, Wolfgang Schüssel, had already made the statement in his inaugural speech on 13 January 2000 before the OSCE Permanent Council that the "establishing of links between the OSCE and the ASEAN Regional Forum would be very useful for our understanding of the security situation in those parts of Asia bordering the OSCE area and would be in line with the growing Asian interest in the OSCE".¹⁸

On the periphery of the Lucerne Ministerial meeting of the Human Security Network¹⁹, Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan, in his capacity as the ARF Chairman, met with the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Austrian Foreign Minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner, on 11 May 2000 to sound out whether there was a possibility of creating a relationship between the ARF and the OSCE in a kind of "flexible dialogue". The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office supported this initiative fully.

The reason for the positive reaction to this ARF approach was the consideration that OSCE space also includes Asian states and that Asia shares OSCE security interests, in particular with regard to Russia, as well as concerns and interests with regard to Central Asia. Moreover OSCE features, which are similar to ARF goals and structures, could be useful for further ARF development.

The next step was that the Thai Deputy Foreign Minister M. R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra met with the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on 15 June 2000 in Vienna to again show Thailand's interest in ARF-OSCE relations and to a certain extent begin structuring this joint effort.

The OSCE Chair had already taken the initiative to invite Thailand in its function as ARF Chair to the annual Warsaw OSCE Human Dimension Seminar, which took place in the year 2000 from 23-26 May and dealt with the

18 Address by H.E. Wolfgang Schüssel, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria, Chairman-in-Office, OSCE Permanent Council, 13 January 2000, CIO/GAL/1 of 13 January 2000, at: http://www.osze.at/osze/od/dokumente/upld/CIOSpeech_1301en.rtf.html (OSCE translation). Benita Ferrero-Waldner replaced Schüssel in his post as Foreign Minister and OSCE Chairman-in-Office in February 2000.

19 Within the framework of the Human Security Network 13 foreign ministers from all continents (the Austrian Foreign Minister, Canadian, Chilean, Greek, Irish, Jordanian, Malian, Netherlands, Norwegian, Slovenian, South African - as an observer -, the Swiss and Thai) co-operate "to creat(e) a more humane world where people can live in security and dignity, free from want and fear, and with equal opportunities to develop their human potential to the full". The Human Security Network, Second Ministerial Meeting, Chairman's Summary, Lucerne, 11-12 May 2000.

topic "Children and Armed Conflict", a topic which has particular importance also in Asia. Two Thai diplomats accepted this invitation and took an active part in the seminar. The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office gave indications to the Thai Deputy Foreign Minister that this type of participation was an opportunity for inter-institutional contacts.

Other options she indicated would be regular informal meetings between the chairs of both institutions, the examination of possibilities of OSCE co-operation with other international organizations mentioned in the *Platform for Co-operative Security*²⁰ which was adopted at the OSCE Istanbul Summit as well as the participation of representatives from one organization at the ministerial meetings of the other - depending on the modalities and whether there was a consensus among the participating States. Furthermore, the Austrian Chair envisaged inviting the ARF Chair to seminars that would be of interest to the ARF as well as offering an OSCE contribution to an ARF seminar organized by the EU on confidence- and security-building measures.

This recommendation was later put into practice. A representative of the OSCE Chair presented a paper on confidence- and security-building measures in the OSCE security concept²¹ at an ARF seminar on "Approaches to Confidence Building" which took place on 2-4 October 2000 in Helsinki. In addition, a representative of the OSCE Secretariat held a lecture on OSCE co-operation with international organizations.

The Vietnamese ARF Chair, in office since the summer of 2000, has not continued plans and initiatives to intensify OSCE contacts with the same vigour as the Thai Chair. It remains to be seen whether a future Chair, the ARF or some of its members, or the OSCE from its position, will engage in these ideas again to maintain or develop them.

The Asian Partners for Co-operation

Alongside the Mediterranean dimension which provided the respective Mediterranean states with a privileged status in their relationship to the OSCE, at the beginning of the 1990s, also Japan and soon thereafter, the Republic of Korea were granted a special status within the framework of the OSCE. This status is more than that of an observer, which is the customary status offered by other international institutions, and in addition to professing common values with the OSCE, the country concerned is willing to co-operate with the Organization and to contribute to its goals and activities.

20 The Platform for Co-operative Security was designated as an "essential element" (p. 429) of the Charter for European Security and these were adopted and signed on 19 November 1999 at the Istanbul Summit. Charter for European Security, cited above (Note 3), Operational Document - the Platform for Co-operative Security, pp. 441-443.

21 The exact title was: "C(S)BMs in the OSCE security concept, and its application: successes and failures, lessons learnt, future trends - from a political perspective".

The reason the OSCE does not give observer status to states or other institutions is related to the fact that the OSCE is not an international organization according to international law and thus cannot implement the practices usual in external relations. In principle, however, there is nothing blocking the path for establishing an observer status at the OSCE. It would even be useful, *inter alia* for those states that would like to form a loose relationship with the OSCE, but do not fit the criteria or have no desire to fulfil the criteria giving them a unique special status.

At the Helsinki CSCE Summit at the beginning of July 1992, Japan, because it had a particular interest in this - and with US backing - was granted special status. Japan's agreement to the ideals and goals of the CSCE as well as its interest - due to the fact that OSCE space has extended to the borders of Japan - in European security issues were the decisive factors leading to this. The fact that Japan was considering financial support for the Organization was not an insignificant element of this decision.

Japan was "invited to attend CSCE meetings, including those of Heads of State and Government, the CSCE Council (today: the Ministerial Council, author's comment), the Committee of Senior Officials (today: the Senior Council, author's comment) and other appropriate CSCE bodies which consider specific topics of expanded consultation and co-operation. Representatives of Japan may contribute to such meetings, without participating in the preparation and adoption of decisions, on subjects in which Japan has a direct interest and/or wishes to co-operate actively with the CSCE."²²

On 15 June 1994, South Korea was granted a similar if not quite as comprehensive status.²³ Its representatives are not invited to Permanent Council meetings.

Japan as well as Korea - the latter particularly during its economic boom in the mid-1990s - have contributed financially as well as with personnel to OSCE activities, in particular during election monitoring in the Balkans.

The Development of the Co-operative Relationship

In accordance with the relevant decisions and practice, the "OSCE partners for co-operation" are today invited to OSCE meetings of Heads of State or Government, the Ministerial Council, the Economic Forum, implementation meetings of the human as well as the politico-military dimension, special meetings of the human dimension and of course to seminars, where they have the right to speak. Only Japan has a seat on the Permanent Council.

22 CSCE Helsinki Document 1992: The Challenges of Change, Helsinki, 10 July 1992, Helsinki Decisions, Chapter IV, Point 10, in: Bloed (Ed.), cited above (Note 2), pp. 701-777, here: p. 732.

23 Cf. Decision of the Committee of Senior Officials at the 27th Meeting of the Committee on 15 June 1994, in: CSCE, 27th Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials, Prague 1994, 27-CSO/Journal No. 3, Annex 5.

Parallel to the general invitations to countries of the eastern and southern Mediterranean to follow-up and summit meetings since Helsinki 1975, Japan was the first country to be given a special status in 1992. Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia followed in the spring of 1994, Korea in the autumn of the same year, Jordan in the spring of 1998 and Thailand on 9 November 2000.²⁴

From the beginning, it was the Austrian Chair's goal to improve the relationship of the OSCE with its Asian partners for co-operation. On 13 January 2000, the then Chairman-in-Office Wolfgang Schüssel made the following statement to the Permanent Council:

"The intensification of relations with Japan and the Republic of Korea, our Asian Partners for Co-operation, will be a particular concern of the Austrian Chairmanship and could be fostered through high-level political contacts and an OSCE seminar in the region."²⁵

The plan was that for the first time in its history the OSCE would conduct a seminar in Asia together with its Asian partners for co-operation. The Mediterranean seminars were to be used as a model. The idea behind this initiative by the Austrian Chair - based on a South Korean concept for a non-governmental national OSCE seminar in Seoul - was the consideration that the OSCE should give a sign of its esteem for its Asian partners for co-operation by visiting them in their region.

In the end, the OSCE came to an agreement with Japan and South Korea to hold joint conferences in each of their capitals:

- on 11-12 December 2000 in Tokyo on the topic "Comprehensive Security in Central Asia - Sharing OSCE and Asian Experiences"²⁶ and
- on 19-21 March 2001 in Seoul on the applicability of OSCE confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) in North-East Asia.²⁷

Another element in active OSCE policy with respect to its Asian partners for co-operation in the year 2000 was a workshop from 17-19 July conducted by

24 The states concerned were originally referred to as "non-participating (Mediterranean) states", a term which the Permanent Council changed to "(Mediterranean) partners for co-operation" on 5 December 1995. Whereas the term "partners for co-operation" is used exclusively for the Asian partners, those in the Mediterranean are referred to as "Mediterranean partners for co-operation" or also "Mediterranean partners" (one of the unsystematic or illogical aspects of the OSCE, which can only be explained by its historical development).

25 Speech before the Permanent Council, cited above (Note 18).

26 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Permanent Council, Decision No. 367, OSCE-Japan Conference 2000: "Comprehensive Security in Central Asia - Sharing OSCE and Asian Experiences", PC.DEC/367 of 24 August 2000.

27 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Permanent Council, Decision No. 377, OSCE-Korea Conference 2001: "Applicability of OSCE CSBMs in North-East Asia", PC.DEC/377 of 9 November 2000.

the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, in which all OSCE bodies and institutions were introduced and clarified to representatives from the capitals of the partners for co-operation and Mediterranean partners.

But contacts were also intensified on the political level during the year 2000. For the first time, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office invited her colleagues from the Asian co-operation partner countries to attend the traditional Ministerial meeting of the OSCE Troika with the Mediterranean partner states. Issues like the Balkans as well as "human security" were on the agenda of this meeting on 26 November 2000 in which, from the Asian side, the Thai Foreign Minister, a Special Representative from the Japanese government and the Korean Vice Minister for the Co-ordination of Government Policy participated.

The Japanese Foreign Minister and the Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office (the Chairperson-in-Office was unable to come because of an unexpected EU commitment) opened the Tokyo Conference on "Comprehensive Security in Central Asia - Sharing OSCE and Asian Experiences", which was held during the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship and the Japanese Chairmanship of the G-7/8. It boasted a number of successes: The participation of Senior Officials from the capitals of all Central Asian participating States as well as 31 OSCE participating States and eight (of the nine) partners for co-operation, the active participation of all Central Asian participating States on all items of the conference agenda, the confirmation of the Central Asian participating States to observe the OSCE commitments in the human dimension, as well as the repeated emphasis on the integral linkage of all security issues including those of human, economic and environmental security.²⁸

The Seoul Conference on the "Applicability of OSCE CSBMs in North-East Asia" - which took place under the Romanian Chair - could not book the same successes as the Tokyo Conference.²⁹ The central goal of informing South and North Korea on and familiarizing them with OSCE experiences in the area of CSBMs to be able to offer potential proposals towards moving closer together in the wake of President Kim Dae Jung's "sunshine policy" was not realized. The reasons for this are manifold and no doubt are also not within the OSCE framework. The new US government made clear at the beginning of its period in office, it would not fully back the "sunshine policy" and at about the time of the OSCE conference in Seoul, Pyongyang called off a high-level bilateral meeting with South Korea.

28 Cf. OSCE, Office of the Secretary General, Section for External Co-operation, Consolidated Summary, OSCE-Japan Conference 2000: "Comprehensive Security in Central Asia - Sharing OSCE and Asian Experiences", Tokyo, 11-12 December 2000, SEC.GAL/6/01 of 25 January 2001.

29 Cf. OSCE, Office of the Secretary General, Section for External Co-operation, Consolidated Summary, OSCE-Korea Conference 2001: "Applicability of OSCE CSBMs in North-East Asia", Seoul, 19-21 March 2001, SEC.GAL/52/01 of 6 April 2001.

Thailand

The above-mentioned contacts in early summer 2000 between the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and the Thai Foreign Minister along with the Thai Deputy Foreign Minister - in their position as ARF Chair - also served to bring out Thailand's desire for bilateral relations with the OSCE. Thailand was striving to gain the status of a "partner for co-operation".

Many observers have repeatedly pointed out the professional manner of Thai diplomacy and the speed at which they have reached their goal. Already during the late summer of 2000, Thailand presented important OSCE participating States with an *aide mémoire* in which Bangkok gave reasons why they should be granted the status of partner for co-operation. Among these are the regional role Thailand plays in Southeast Asia and Asia in general (within the framework of ASEAN, ARF, AFTA, ASEM) - based on similar concepts to those of the OSCE (comprehensive security concept, emphasizing "human security") -, the lack of relations between the OSCE and Southeast Asia, Thailand's engagement in Europe (Eastern Europe, Kosovo) as well as its possible function as a bridge for the OSCE and the transfer of its values to (Southeast) Asia.

At short notice, Thailand invited a selected number of OSCE participating States and the OSCE Secretary General to a workshop in Bangkok on the topic "Thailand and OSCE: the Way towards a Future Co-operation" held on 28 September 2000. The Thai Foreign Minister in person opened the workshop. The workshop was not only meant to clarify the viewpoints of all participants by presenting contributions by the OSCE Chair, the OSCE Secretary General and the Secretariat and the Representative of the EU Presidency to the OSCE as well as high-level representatives of the Thai government and universities, but was also meant to promote the Thai candidacy to become an OSCE partner for co-operation. This was in fact achieved: The seminar was even explicitly mentioned in the decision by the Permanent Council granting this special status.

As it became clear that Thailand would already be granted a special status by the Vienna Ministerial in November - a situation that at the beginning had been excluded by almost everyone - on 11 October 2000, the Thai Foreign Minister filed the appropriate written request to the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. In it, he referred to the fact that contacts between his country and the OSCE were becoming ever closer as well as mentioning the already existing OSCE contacts outside OSCE space. He also stated that Thailand not only shared the OSCE concept of co-operative security and the importance of a security dialogue, but also the principles, values and goals of the Organization. Thailand would be prepared to actively promote OSCE goals and contribute to OSCE activities "as appropriate".

Already on 9 November 2000, Thailand was granted the status of partner for co-operation - quickly enough so that the Thai Foreign Minister would be

able to take part in the Eighth OSCE Ministerial on 27 and 28 November 2000 (in Vienna) - which in fact he did - rather than so to speak "wait at the front door" to have his application granted.

The arrangement of Thai rights are like those of Korea in wording and substance adapted to the structural changes which have occurred in the OSCE in the meantime as well as the forms of participation of the partners for co-operation in seminars.³⁰

In this manner, Thailand became the third Asian partner for co-operation of the Organization and the first in Southeast Asia.

The willingness quickly achieved on both sides to rapidly grant Thailand this special status, based on the development and state of its democracy and respect for human rights, prevented what some had demanded, the establishment of criteria for future partners for co-operation. Therefore in the same meeting that Thailand was admitted as a partner for co-operation, the Permanent Council passed a decision to task "an informal open-ended working group with developing recommendations by June of next year on the basis for considering future applications for partnership".³¹ This working group was set up and begun working in early 2001.³²

30 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Permanent Council, Decision No. 378, Granting of the Status of Partner for Co-operation to Thailand, PC.DEC/378 of 9 November 2000.

31 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Permanent Council, Decision No. 379, Developing Recommendations Regarding Applications for Future Partnership PC.DEC/379 of 9 November 2000.

32 On 19 July 2001, the Permanent Council took note of and welcomed the report on recommendations concerning future applications for partnership (cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Permanent Council, Decision No. 430, PC.DEC/430 of 19 July 2001). However, apart from establishing the status quo, not much was achieved in this paper. On the contrary: Rather than being simplified, existing structures were solidified and made more complicated. The partner states who had already been admitted remained divided into three categories - Japan; the Mediterranean partners; Korea and Thailand -, the creation of a specific "partner state status" was rejected and priority was given to improving co-operation with regional organizations rather than new individual applicants. However, if another state were to gain special status, based on its conceptual affinity to the OSCE and the value of its partnership, through a decision by the Permanent Council, this status would approximate that of the partners for co-operation or the Mediterranean partners (i.e. Japan's status will remain exclusively reserved for Japan). Before it files for application, an interested state should however take part in the meetings of the Contact Group.

In the report of the working group (PC.DEL/344/01/Rev.3 of 28 June 2001) a number of options for reinforced contacts to the *existing* partner states have been listed. With the exception of the creation of an informal contact group with the Asian partners, these represent the existing practice (Minister Troika meetings with the Asian partners, deploying monitors from the partner states in OSCE election monitoring missions, seconding personnel to field missions, seminars with Asian partners, participation by representatives of the Mediterranean partners at specific meetings of the Permanent Council, participation in CSBMs according to the Vienna Document). The creation of a contact group with the Asian partners duplicating the one of the Mediterranean partners seems primarily to create additional meetings: It would have been better to extend the existing Contact Group with the Mediterranean partners to include the Asian partners thereby enabling it to achieve more real substance and significance.

Conclusions

The OSCE year 2000 under the Austrian Chair was characterized by an intensity in its activities with regard to Central Asia unknown up to now as well as by a distinctive extension of relations with East Asian and Southeast Asian states.

Central Asian issues and concerns of the Central Asian participating States were treated actively, comprehensively and with initiative. Moreover, the concepts and concerns of the region were given special attention. Here, all OSCE dimensions were taken into consideration.

The rapid admittance of Thailand as a third Asian partner for co-operation opened up new avenues geographically and topically. There was a new appeal to establish criteria for partners for co-operation and negotiations on this were launched.

The OSCE conferences on central topics of the Organization in Tokyo and Seoul have given rise to successes and new experiences and have already led the third Asian partner, Thailand, to show an interest in holding a similar event.

It is in the hands of the OSCE, its changing Chairs as well as interested participating States, including the Central Asian ones, as well as in the hands of the Asian partners for co-operation, other Asian states and Asian institutions, to further the policy of an Asian dimension, which is more than just a sum total of single initiatives. They all could offer ideas to the OSCE, which Thailand has done as a nation and in its function as the ARF Chair and has succeeded in its endeavours.