

Preface

In 2004 Bulgaria took on the challenge of chairing the OSCE. This was a tremendous opportunity for my country – and for me personally – to lead this dynamic, comprehensive, and extremely relevant organization.

The world is currently trying to cope with a wide range of challenges: terrorism, climate change, globalization and its effects on sovereignty, the opportunities and threats of more open borders, and the danger of failing states.

The planet has become so interconnected through advances in information exchange, travel, and communication that we can not ignore the effects that events in one part of the world can have in another. Confronting and resolving common problems by speaking together and finding common solutions is in everybody's interest.

This has been the philosophy of the OSCE for the past thirty years, and it seems more relevant today than ever. The OSCE's comprehensive view of security (which looks beyond military security), its co-operative, multi-lateral approach, and its broad membership (plus its Mediterranean and Asian partners for co-operation) makes it well-suited to be *the* European security forum for effective dialogue, conflict prevention, and post-conflict rehabilitation.

Of course, as the world changes so does the OSCE. In the 1970s and 80s, the (then) CSCE was instrumental in uniting a divided Europe. In the 1990s it was a catalyst for post-Communist transition. Today it plays a useful bridging role, bringing the enlarged EU closer to its "new neighbourhood", and providing a unique channel of communication between North America, the Russian Federation, Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia on a wide range of important security issues. It also uses its field activities, institutions, political dialogue, and Secretariat to work with participating States to improve democracy and security within states and promote good neighbourliness between states.

New realities in Europe and in the world necessitate changes in the OSCE. That is why the Bulgarian Chairmanship has initiated a dialogue on reforming the Organization. We believe that a consensus can be gradually built on proposals such as enhancing the political dialogue within the OSCE, achieving a new and effective balance between its three dimensions, relocating the Economic Forum to Central Asia and the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting to the South Caucasus, and strengthening the role of the Secretary General, the Chairman-in-Office, and the Parliamentary Assembly.

The 2004 enlargements of NATO and the EU brought the number of OSCE participating States that are members of this, if I may say so, *sui generis* NATO/EU caucus, to 32. The rest of the OSCE participating States are

mainly from the CIS. One of the challenges before us, as I see it, is to intensify the dialogue and interaction between these two caucuses. It is my understanding that the OSCE could act as a bridge over the Black Sea to the participating States from the South Caucasus and Central Asia, and the Chairmanship has suggested shifting budget resources from decreased or discontinued OSCE field activities in the Western Balkans to these two regions, accordingly.

Bulgaria identified implementation as one of its main themes for the Chairmanship. Our view is that the OSCE has now developed a significant *acquis* of hard and soft commitments. Their effectiveness is in their implementation.

Encouraging implementation over the long term means getting states to “domesticize” international commitments, and one way to do this is through education. That is why Bulgaria has tried to move education up the OSCE’s agenda.

A great deal of our agenda in 2004 was set by decisions made in 2003, particularly at the Maastricht Ministerial Council Meeting. This included an OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-first Century, a Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension, efforts to strengthen OSCE capacity to combat trafficking in human beings, promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, implementing an action plan on improving the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area, strengthening our counter-terrorism efforts by focusing more on travel document security, man-portable air defence systems and establishing a counter-terrorism network, and paying increased attention in the politico-military field to small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition. We were also encouraged to look at ways of developing further dialogue and co-operation with our partners for co-operation and to explore the scope for wider sharing of OSCE norms, principles, and commitments with others.

In 2004, there was considerable focus on “horizontal” issues such as improving the OSCE’s capabilities in policing, border management and security, counter-terrorism, anti-trafficking, and tolerance and non-discrimination. Core activities such as freedom of the media, national minority issues, human rights, and democratization were also key concerns.

As with any Chairmanship, our agenda was also shaped by current events. Georgia was the highest profile example with the buzz of the Rose Revolution humming through the corridors of the Maastricht Ministerial, followed by high-profile presidential and parliamentary elections monitored by the OSCE early in the new year, and then the tensions surrounding the new Georgian government’s efforts to consolidate its position in Ajaria and South Ossetia, which the OSCE worked hard to keep peaceful.

Kosovo was another example. The explosion of violence in March demonstrated the fragility of the situation and the importance of the interna-

tional community's work in seeking to stabilize and improve inter-ethnic relations in this still volatile region.

OSCE activities in other regions, such as the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova), and Central Asia, were less high profile but discreetly and constructively instrumental in effecting change for the good, or keeping the spotlight on non-compliance with OSCE commitments.

These and other topical issues are discussed in this year's edition of the OSCE Yearbook. As usual, the Yearbook covers a wide range of OSCE-related issues from various perspectives in a thought-provoking and comprehensive way. This high-quality academic publication allows insiders to express open, informed views, and provides outside experts with a platform to encourage the OSCE community to look at certain issues with fresh eyes.

2004 was a busy year for my country, my government and myself, one we spent grappling with many of the issues that you will read about here. I hope that the legacy of our Chairmanship and the Sofia Ministerial Council (which will no doubt be covered by next year's Yearbook) will contribute to the continued development of the OSCE and to a greater appreciation of its merits and further potential in coping with contemporary European security issues.