

Bulgaria and the OSCE

Bulgaria's contribution to the OSCE in 2006 grew out of the active role it played during the preceding three years when Bulgaria was a member of the OSCE Troika, and particularly in 2004, when Bulgaria held the OSCE Chairmanship. Thus, Bulgaria's current position should be seen first and foremost as a manifestation of the decisions, conclusions, and statements of the three OSCE Ministerial Councils held in the period from 2003 to 2005 in Maastricht, Sofia, and Ljubljana, respectively.

Bulgaria's involvement in the leadership of the OSCE during that three-year period coincided with momentous developments in its rapidly maturing (post-Communist) attitude towards European and international security and stability. In December 2002, Bulgaria joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and, in April 2005, Sofia signed the Treaty of Accession to the European Union, which provided the legal basis for formal accession in 2007. These two acts of the Bulgarian state went a considerable way towards institutionalizing its foreign policy re-orientation in a direction that broadly focused on upholding and contributing to the shared democratic values and common strategic pursuits of the Euro-Atlantic community. Bulgaria's new identity and role has, in turn, allowed it to make a more responsible and concerted contribution to the common goals, principles, and commitments undertaken by the OSCE participating States. Bulgarian diplomacy at the OSCE also encouraged a more structured dialogue and interaction with other international organizations and institutions, including the UN, the EU, NATO, and the Council of Europe. Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivaylo Kalfin emphasized this point in his statement at the Ljubljana Ministerial Council.¹

In view of the important systemic developments in Bulgarian foreign policy and the higher level of international trust it had begun to enjoy (exemplified by the positive Porto Ministerial decision on Bulgaria's OSCE Chairmanship in 2004), Sofia felt it was essential to concentrate on fundamentals. It had an early opportunity with the elaboration of the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century. It contributed to this text for two basic reasons. First, the OSCE Strategy relates to and largely coincides with principles and goals of the foreign and security policy of Bulgaria and its partners, in particular the European Security Strategy adopted by the European Council in December 2003. Second, much of the work of the OSCE policy-making bodies in Vienna and a great many OSCE field activities are linked to "unfinished business" in the Balkans. In

¹ Cf. Statement by H.E. Mr Ivaylo Kalfin at the 13th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, 6 December 2005.

this respect, another major contribution of Bulgaria in its new capacity as a member of the OSCE Troika involved helping with the draft of the Statement on South-Eastern Europe as a Region of Co-operation, adopted by the OSCE Ministerial Council at the end of 2003. With that statement the then 55 OSCE participating States “recognize[d] the importance of the European Union’s (EU) Stabilization and Association Process and the declared intention of the countries of the region to integrate into Euro-Atlantic structures”².

This consensual position is a source of inspiration for Bulgaria’s own regional policy. Together with the whole body of decisions taken by the European Council on the European prospects of the Western Balkans, it forms the cornerstone of the Bulgarian approach to this aspect of regional security and stability.

Bulgaria Acquires New Experience in the EU Partnership Co-ordination Process

One of the intriguing new foreign policy experiences Bulgaria has undergone since signing the EU accession treaty on 25 April 2005 has been its participation, together with Romania, in the consultation and policy-making process carried out by the 25 EU partners at all major international forums, including the OSCE. At this initial stage, this is an endeavour for the two acceding countries that combines elements of learning, information sharing, and occasional substantive contributions to common positions and policies. The latter follow the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), but are carefully tailored to serve the principles and goals of the broader OSCE agenda.

The process of formal and informal consultations among the 27 States and the delegation of the European Commission strengthens their political partnership and institutional relationships and lays the groundwork for further perfection of the consultative mechanism. This work of co-ordination is a unique feature of European integration: Its one minor weakness is its inevitably time-consuming nature, while its advantages are manifold, key among them being its inherently multilateral approach and the strong tendency of the positions taken towards balance and moderation. These qualities are distinctly useful to the OSCE as “the primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its region”³.

The elaboration of EU responses to major developments in the OSCE area, e.g. the 2006 presidential and parliamentary elections in Belarus and

2 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Eleventh Meeting of the Ministerial Council, Maastricht, 1 and 2 December 2003, MC.DOC/1/03, 2 December 2003, *Statement on South-Eastern Europe as a Region of Co-operation*, pp. 29-30, here: p. 29.

3 *OSCE Handbook*, Vienna 2000, p. 3, at: http://www.osce.org/publications/osce/2005/04/13858_222_en.pdf.

Ukraine, respectively, or the continuing impasse in the “frozen conflicts” in Moldova and Georgia, has provided Bulgaria with additional valuable experience in the complex process of EU co-ordination. In particular, it has gained insight into the interrelationship between common and national foreign policies (in the case of Belarus), and the interplay between EU involvement in OSCE missions and the Union’s own field missions in the same OSCE countries.

Against this backdrop, Bulgaria made its *debut* in EU co-ordination as *chef de file* for Albania.⁴

In this capacity, Bulgaria has led the way in formulating EU positions on developments in Albania and on anything to do with the OSCE mission in that country. After carrying out consultations, Bulgaria provided a draft for the EU response to the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, Ambassador Pavel Vacek, at a meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council. This year’s EU response reflects the spirit of the Salzburg EU Ministerial on the Western Balkans, which placed greater demands on the countries involved in the Stabilization and Association Process. Thus, while the EU stated that “it is pleased to note that encouraging developments have taken place in Albania”, it nevertheless expressed certain concerns and urged the government and all political parties to vigorously pursue reforms. Further efforts on the part of the government to complete the legal and administrative framework for the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities would be welcome.⁵

The above, and particularly the reference to inadequate attention to the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, was disputed by the head of the Albanian delegation to the OSCE, Ambassador Zef Mazi. He also expressed his view that the EU showed insufficient recognition of the measures undertaken by the Albanian government to tackle organized crime and corruption.

Again, these verbal exchanges have to be understood in the light of the exceptional responsibility incorporated in the EU policies towards the countries of the Western Balkans. In terms of both its extent and its depth, the support provided by the EU in the political, economic, and social aspects of Albania’s transition to the rule of law and a market economy far exceeds the efforts and contributions by any other state or state group within the OSCE. This fundamental fact turns the EU-Albania relationship into a truly strategic partnership in which the value placed by both sides on ever closer integration means that the classical language of diplomacy is replaced by open and frank discussion. Consequently, the Bulgarian delegation at the OSCE has regarded the invitation to act as *chef de file* on Albania in the EU context not only as a

4 In the Bulgarian delegation, this task was given to Ms Daniela Boudinova, Counsellor, who is also in charge of EU matters.

5 Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Permanent Council No. 611, 25 May 2006. EU response to the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania.

professional challenge but as a test of its analytical capabilities and sense of objectivity and balance. With time, this function provided by Bulgaria on behalf of the EU could become the basis for a much deeper partnership with Albania, one that would help the country realize its European potential in full and within a timeframe commensurate with the aspirations of the Albanian people.

Bulgaria Is a Source of Security and Stability in South Eastern Europe

In its foreign policy work, Bulgaria proceeds from the underlying principle that regional co-operation in South-eastern Europe is not an alternative to European integration but one of its inseparable parts. Hence, Bulgaria is striving to assert its leading role in the process of integrating the region into European and Euro-Atlantic structures. It believes in the gradual overall integration of the region into the EU and NATO and has taken a leading proactive stance in this respect. In the meantime, it is encouraging the application of European standards by all regional states in their intergovernmental relations concerning the region, and the realization of fundamental infrastructure projects with regional implications.

The above is particularly true of Bulgaria's approach to its neighbours in the Western Balkans. Based on its experience as an EU candidate and accession country, Bulgaria has pledged its readiness to provide assistance in its neighbours' quest for European integration and has signed memoranda for co-operation with all of them. Bulgaria's policy of good neighbourly relations and co-operation extends to countries in the Black Sea region as well.

The OSCE attaches great importance to a positive outcome of the process to determine Kosovo's future status. As a neighbouring country and one that will be directly affected by the viability of that outcome, Bulgaria supports the EU's policy on this matter. The Bulgarian government's approach to Kosovo is based on continuous and close observation of developments there and a deep knowledge and understanding of the underlying factors that determine the dynamics of the situation and its implications for regional security and stability.

In its capacity as Chairman-in-Office, Bulgaria had the unenviable task of co-ordinating the OSCE response to the outbreak of violence in Kosovo in March 2004.⁶

Two years later, direct talks on the final status of Kosovo were already in progress.

Bulgaria appreciates the EU approach, which considers the concerns of both Pristina and Belgrade and has focused on the efforts of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Future Status Process for Kosovo,

6 Cf. Statement by Dr Solomon Passy, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria and Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, 7 December 2004.

Martti Ahtisaari, who works on the basis of the Contact Group's Guiding Principles and the Contact Group Ministerial Statement of 31 January 2006.

In line with its proactive stance, Bulgaria invited Special Envoy Ahtisaari to Sofia for consultations. On the eve of this visit, Bulgaria made it clear that it is guided by the EU Council Conclusions, which reaffirmed, among other things, that Kosovo's future status must be fully compatible with European values and norms and comply with international legal instruments and obligations, as well as with the United Nations Charter. The status settlement should aim at a Kosovo "where all – regardless of ethnic background – are free to work and travel without fear, hostility, or danger and all citizens are treated equally and different cultures are respected."⁷

Bulgaria has valuable experiences along exactly the lines prescribed for Kosovo by the EU Council. It is also convinced that the territory's final status should take into consideration the implications for the wider regional context. Bulgaria finds it heartening that the European Union "attaches great importance to a positive outcome of [the future status] process" and that "its success will be essential both for providing a clear perspective for the people of Kosovo and for the overall stability of the region".⁸

At his meeting with Mr Ahtisaari, Bulgarian Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev underlined Bulgaria's readiness to "participate actively in the diplomatic efforts to reach a solution on the Kosovo issue".⁹ Expressing hope that Kosovo's future status will not threaten regional stability, Stanishev encouraged "useful contacts at all levels", the aim being to hear "the 'voice' of the region".¹⁰ For his part, the Special Envoy stated that stability in the Balkans influences not only the region, but the whole of Europe and "this has to be repeated to the people in the European countries".¹¹

In Sofia, Special Envoy Ahtisaari also held talks with President Georgi Parvanov, Speaker of Parliament Georgi Pirinski, and Foreign Minister Ivaylo Kalfin. Speaking to media representatives after his meeting with Minister Kalfin, the Special Envoy noted that he very much appreciated "the constructive efforts of the Bulgarian government on the issue of Kosovo".

As FSC Chair (May-July 2006), Bulgaria Encourages Security Dialogue

On assuming the Chair of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) in mid-year, Bulgaria realized it had an immense responsibility. This took the form of steering the Forum in its efforts to make good on the commitments and

7 Council Conclusions on the Western Balkans, 2687th External Relations Council Meeting, Brussels, 10 May 2006, at: <http://www.delprn.ec.europa.eu/en/whatsnew/20051107.htm>.

8 Austrian Presidency of the EU, EU Response to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro, Mr. Vuk Draskovic, OSCE Permanent Council No. 608, 11 May 2006.

9 Sergei Stanishev, Any solution to the Kosovo issue should have as its objective stability in the Balkans, 8 May 2006, at: <http://www.government.bg>.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

mechanisms relating to politico-military matters, as well as to enhance military security by promoting openness, transparency, and co-operation among participating States. This sensitive work could not be carried out in isolation from the evolving general political atmosphere in the Permanent Council and the FSC – the OSCE’s two key decision-making bodies. That atmosphere, while not negative, was not exactly propitious for any major initiatives or breakthroughs. There was not much movement in the key areas of the FSC’s activities. Differences in the interpretation of the 1999 Istanbul commitments in view of the failed CFE Third Review Conference left their mark on the first half of 2006. This issue does not pertain directly to the FSC but it influenced the mood within it. Under these circumstances, Bulgaria ensured that the Forum’s security dialogue continued and provided ample opportunity for any delegation wishing to introduce proposals for consideration in the two Working Groups.¹²

The tentative working programme of the three countries chairing the FSC in 2006 (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, and Canada) set out the scope and pace of activities and the objectives for the year, aiming for them to be “manageable”. The main priorities were outlined and the approach of the Chair to undertaking them was elaborated in some detail in the Statement of the Chairperson on the occasion of the assumption of the FSC Chairmanship by the Republic of Bulgaria.¹³

Assisted by the Italian *chef de file* and colleagues from the FSC Support Unit, the Bulgarian Chair completed the preparations for the fourth Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) on 27-28 June 2006, and advised the Chairperson of the Permanent Council on the agenda and modalities of the conference. In particular, it tabled a list of relevant politico-military elements for consideration in Working Group B and subsequent discussion at the conference itself. The Bulgarian Chairmanship also provided the moderator for Working Session 2 of the ASRC, whose main task was to discuss and build upon the outcome of the excellent Seminar on Military Doctrine, which was organized by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Chairmanship on 14 and 15 February 2006 in Vienna.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship had the happy duty of presenting the OSCE’s achievements at the Second UN Review Conference on the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in all its aspects (New York, 26 June-7 July 2006). It did so after careful and lengthy preparations, which involved, in particular, the holding of a Special Meeting of the FSC on 17th May 2006. That meeting was characterized by an exceptionally high level of professionalism. The discussion focused on the current level of implementation of

12 Peter Poptchev, Minister Plenipotentiary, Chargé d’Affaires of the Bulgarian Permanent Mission to the OSCE, chaired the Forum, while Mr Georgi Georgiev, Counselor, and Colonel Dobri Totev, Military Advisor, chaired working groups B and A, respectively.

13 Cf. Statement by the Chairperson, 3 May 2006.

SALW-related FSC decisions and documents and identified possible areas of future work. The delegations agreed that SALW achievements were a significant success story for the OSCE.

In his statement to the New York Conference on behalf of the OSCE, the Bulgarian Chairperson of the FSC emphasized that the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons agreed upon by the FSC in 2000 constituted an OSCE landmark. It responded to the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms, which are significantly correlated with violence and crime. The document made a substantial contribution to the efforts emanating from the UN Programme of Action, the provisions of which were often similar and complementary to the OSCE document. Finally, the document committed participating States to a set of standards, which, if fully implemented, would help them to abide by the Programme of Action at national, regional, and global levels.¹⁴

Under the Bulgarian Chairmanship, the Security Dialogue continued to be lively and thought-provoking. Among the many interesting presentations at the Forum it is worth mentioning the speech by a representative of the US European Command on the external factors pertaining to the OSCE security environment and the views of the French Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on the forthcoming Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. The US presentation, in particular, addressed strategic issues of particular relevance to the work of the FSC.

Responding to widespread interest among participating States, the Bulgarian FSC Chairmanship invited Ambassador Peter Burian, Chairman of the UNSCR 1540 Committee, to speak to the Forum on developments in the implementation of that important Security Council resolution.

At the invitation of the Arms Control and Co-ordination Section, the Bulgarian FSC Chairperson took part in a meeting of the EAPC Working Group at NATO Headquarters and informed the members of the EAPC of the activities of the OSCE in the area of SALW regulation. He identified spheres of mutual interest and potential co-operation between the OSCE and NATO and encouraged their further development.

Bulgaria Appreciates the Economic and Environmental Dimension of the OSCE

The Porto Ministerial Declaration of December 2002 reflected a growing awareness among the OSCE participating States of the important role the economic and environmental dimension could play. The adoption of the 2003 Maastricht Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimen-

14 Cf. Statement on behalf of the OSCE by Mr Peter Poptchev, Chairperson of the Forum for Security Co-operation, 29 June 2006, New York.

sion and the Sofia Ministerial Council Decision on Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Economic Forum reiterated the political will of the OSCE in this field. Bulgaria fully supports this new approach.

It believes that the economic and environmental dimension, as one of the three pillars of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security, is of particular relevance. Bulgaria adheres to EU policy, which stipulates that the OSCE should also address the security threats and challenges caused by economic and environmental factors.

In line with the priorities set by the Belgian Chairmanship, the 14th Economic Forum, which took place in Prague during the last week of May 2006, addressed major issues of importance to all OSCE States: transport development and the elaboration of handbooks on the business and investment climate and on labour migration. Bulgaria aligned itself with the EU position of highlighting the strategic importance of transport development in enhancing regional economic co-operation and stability, with a special emphasis on co-operation in specific regions. The key contribution of the OSCE lies in facilitating dialogue, which aims at raising awareness and creating political will to overcome obstacles to the development of transport activities.¹⁵

At the 14th Economic Forum, on the launching of the OSCE Investment and Business Guide, Bulgaria reminded delegates that under the Bulgarian Chairmanship in 2004, the importance of a good business climate for investment and economic development had been discussed as one of the priority issues. At the subsequent Economic Forum, the OSCE was encouraged to work with interested government authorities and policy makers to facilitate the sharing of information and experience in support of the development of legislation, policies, and practices that promote favourable conditions for investment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME). Bulgaria is pleased to see that an endeavour that started with Bulgarian involvement has now been completed successfully, due particularly to the efforts of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and experts from Belgium and the United States.¹⁶

On this point, a Senior Advisor in the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities stated in a letter that Bulgaria's support for a positive business and investment climate "is a perfect example for concrete follow-up activities of previous Chairmanships [...] highly welcomed by all delegations".

Bulgaria contributed to partnership in the OSCE by working on important decisions, i.e. on sending an election support team to Afghanistan and on granting Mongolia the status of Partner for Co-operation. In 2006, it contin-

15 Cf. Austrian Presidency: EU Closing Statement; 14th Economic Forum, Prague, 24 May 2006.

16 Cf. Talking Points by Mr Liubomir Todorov, Minister Plenipotentiary, OSCE Delegation of Bulgaria, to the 14th Economic Forum, 22 May 2006. At the Bulgarian Mission, Mr Todorov is also in charge of relations with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and other Partners.

ued to maintain and nourish good relations with the Mediterranean and other partners.

Bulgaria and the OSCE Human Dimension

OSCE activities in the fight against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and other forms of intolerance gained momentum during the Bulgarian Chairmanship. In 2004, three major international events devoted to these issues were held in co-operation with Germany, France, and Belgium.¹⁷

As a result, the foreign ministers adopted a robust decision on tolerance and non-discrimination, which confirmed the OSCE participating States' determination to work together in combating terrorism, xenophobia, discrimination, and anti-Semitism. In addition, as part of the OSCE's overall fight against discrimination and the Organization's efforts to promote tolerance, the Chairman-in-Office appointed three Personal Representatives on Tolerance and Non-discrimination.

Bulgaria regards trafficking in human beings as a serious challenge to the goals and principles of the Organization, including the principle of indivisible security, which requires a well-co-ordinated, comprehensive approach. A key event in 2004 was the appointment of an OSCE Special Representative on Trafficking in Human Beings. The appointment of the new OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media was another important step.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship included education, in the widest sense of the word, among its priorities. For example, a Ministerial Conference on Education as an Investment in the Future was held in Tashkent on 5 April 2004. The Conference brought together Ministers of Education from Central Asian states and Afghanistan and representatives of international financial organizations, development agencies, and research institutions.

At informal OSCE gatherings, held at the beginning of 2006, on possible short- and long-term steps to address issues raised by the publication of controversial cartoons, Bulgaria spoke "as a country, in which different religious communities have co-existed for centuries on end in a spirit of mutual tolerance and respect".¹⁸

It expressed understanding for the outrage and resentment of the Muslims in different countries, but also the firm belief that acts of violence and intolerance are inexcusable. In view of its status as an EU accession country, Bulgaria chose to reiterate that it believes and adheres to the system of values, standards, and principles of the European Union, in addition to those of the OSCE, including its practices on inclusiveness, tolerance, diversity,

17 In 2004, as well as currently, the Officer in charge of Human Dimension issues at the Bulgarian Mission to the OSCE is Ms Selver Yumer, Third Secretary, who also covers Balkan matters.

18 A quote from Bulgarian Prime Minister Sergey Stanishev on the issue. Sofia, 9 February 2006.

mutual respect, and freedom of expression. It also concluded, from the discussions on the cartoons controversy, that the international community, and the OSCE in particular, should further engage in serious, deep, cross-cultural and inter-faith dialogue and expressed readiness “to participate in and facilitate such an exercise”.¹⁹

At the Ljubljana Ministerial Council, Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Kalfin stated that enhanced co-operation and a comprehensive long-term approach remain effective instruments in the 21st century, ones that can ensure that democratic values prevail in all participating States and that adequate responses are made to new transnational threats. The Bulgarian delegation’s contribution to the work of the OSCE in 2006 endeavoured to put this policy into practice.

19 Statement by the Chargé d’Affaires, Bulgarian Permanent Mission, Informal Gathering, Vienna, 16 February 2006.