

The OSCE in the New International Environment in Kosovo

Historical Background

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has been engaged in Kosovo since 1992. On 14 August 1992, the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) decided to establish the OSCE Missions of Long Duration in Kosovo, Sandjak and Vojvodina. This was the first of the Organization's numerous field operations to be deployed. It was designed to promote dialogue between authorities and representatives of the populations and communities in the three regions, collect information on all aspects relevant to violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and promote solutions to relevant problems. In addition, the Missions were tasked with establishing contact points for solving problems that might be identified and assisting in providing information on relevant legislation on human rights, the protection of minorities, free media, and democratic elections.¹ They officially started their activities on 8 September 1992. The Missions had their headquarters in Belgrade and offices in Pristina (with permanent presences in Pejë/Peć and Prizren), in Novi Pazar (with a permanent presence in Priepolje), and in Subotica. The size of the operation was initially limited to twelve members. Although they were eventually authorized to have 40 members, in reality the number of staff never exceeded 20. On 28 June 1993, after the expiration of the Memorandum of Understanding, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), referring to its suspension from the Organization, refused the OSCE's request for a prolongation of the Missions' activities and they were thus withdrawn.²

Following the agreement reached by US envoy Richard Holbrooke with Yugoslav authorities providing for the safe return of refugees to Kosovo and the scaling down of Serbian forces in Kosovo, on 15 October 1998 the Permanent Council declared the preparedness of the OSCE to embark upon verification activities related to compliance of all parties in Kosovo with this agreement.³ The Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) was established on 25

Note: The views presented by the author are his own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the organizations he has worked for.

- 1 Cf. CSCE, *Fifteenth Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials*, Prague 1992, 15-CSO/Journal No. 2, 14 August 1992, Decision on Missions of Long Duration, in: Annex I, Decisions of the Committee of Senior Officials, p. 5.
- 2 The Missions were formally closed on 11 January 2001 when the Permanent Council adopted Decision No. 401 on establishment of an OSCE Mission to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.
- 3 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Permanent Council, *Decision No. 259*, PC.DEC/259, 15 October 1998.

October 1998 to verify compliance by all parties in Kosovo with UN Security Council Resolution 1199. Its mandate encompassed monitoring the maintenance of the ceasefire, border security and policing activity, the facilitation of refugee and IDP return, and the protection of human rights. The KVM was also tasked with liaising closely with FRY, Serbian, and, as appropriate, other authorities in Kosovo, political parties, and other organizations on the ground, with supervising elections to ensure that they are free and fair, and with reporting and making recommendations to the OSCE Permanent Council, the UN Security Council, and other organizations on areas covered by Resolution 1199.⁴ The KVM reached a strength of approximately 1,500 international staff out of a planned 2,000 by February 1999, but due to the deterioration of the security situation, it was unable to carry out the full scope of its tasks. Finally, on 20 March 1999, four days before the start of the NATO campaign, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebæk withdrew the Mission. The KVM was then temporarily based in Skopje and was responsible for administration and planning for the return of the OSCE to Kosovo.

The KVM was formally dissolved on 8 June 1999 when the Permanent Council established the Task Force for Kosovo with the mandate to prepare for the OSCE's re-deployment in Kosovo and to continue to assist the UN and other international organizations.⁵ The Task Force for Kosovo was dissolved on 1 July 1999 and replaced by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo.⁶

Mandate of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK), established on 1 July 1999, is effectively the fourth OSCE field presence in Kosovo. Permanent Council Decision 305 refers to UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) and charges the Mission with activities related to institution- and democracy-building and human rights as a distinct component of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).⁷ This constituted Pillar III of the four-pillar regime established by the resolution. According to its mandate, OMiK, in co-operation with other relevant organizations, concentrates its work in the areas of human resources capacity-building, including the operation of a police school, the training of judicial personnel and the training of civil ad-

4 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Permanent Council, *Decision No. 263*, PC.DEC/263, 25 October 1998 in accordance with the mandate contained in the agreement signed by the Chairman-in-Office (CIO.GAL/65/98).

5 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Permanent Council, *Decision No. 296*, PC.DEC/296/Corrected reissue, 8 June 1999.

6 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Permanent Council, *Decision No. 305*, PC.DEC/305, 1 July 1999.

7 Cf. *ibid.*

ministrators; democratization and governance; organization and supervision of elections; and monitoring, protecting, and promoting human rights.⁸

The 1999 mandate was formulated in general terms, which has allowed the Mission to adjust its activities and priorities to the changing environment in Kosovo. Initially OMiK's work was geared towards helping to establish and develop all the key democratic institutions, notably the Central Election Commission, the Ombudsperson Institution, the Kosovo Judicial Institute, the Criminal Defence Resource Centre, Radio Television Kosovo, the Temporary Media Commissioner, the Kosovo Media Institute, the Kosovo Police Service School, and the Police Inspectorate. Undoubtedly, the best known OSCE achievement is the establishment of the Kosovo Police Service School (KPSS), which has recruited and trained 7,500 police officers since its inception. Other relatively well-known activities include the organization of numerous election cycles, improvements in the Assembly of Kosovo's fulfilment of its legislative and oversight functions, regulation of the media sector, and assistance to municipalities in the provision of services to communities, in particular minority communities. Nevertheless, a significant bulk of the Mission's work is low key and at the grass-roots level and, therefore, not well known by the general public. In addition, as Kosovo's institutions had matured, and in anticipation of the future status settlement, the Mission shifted its focus from institution and capacity building to institution monitoring in late 2005. Needless to say, that success in the field of monitoring is obviously more difficult to measure, and the Mission therefore suffers from insufficient public knowledge of its activities and the lack of an effective public relations strategy.

Declaration of Independence and its Consequences

In autumn 2007, in anticipation of developments to come in Kosovo and given the division among the OSCE participating States regarding a likely declaration of independence by Kosovo authorities, the OSCE was the first international actor to declare itself "status neutral". Despite this, in December 2007 the participating States still did not manage to reach consensus on the annual extension of OMiK's mandate. In particular, Serbia and the Russian Federation preferred to keep the option of non-extension out of fear that the Mission could become a tool for implementing the Comprehensive Status Proposal as drawn up by Martti Ahtisaari. Eventually on 21 December 2007, following lengthy negotiations, the decision was reached to extend the mandate of the Mission until 31 January 2008 and to extend it automatically on a month by month basis thereafter, unless a participating State were to object in writing to the OSCE Permanent Council Chair, whereupon the Mission would immediately start the procedure for closure. At the same time, how-

8 Cf. *ibid.*, points 1-4.

ever, negotiations would begin on the terms of a possible further engagement of the OSCE in Kosovo.⁹ At that time, a widely shared expectation was that once Kosovo declared its independence, the mandate extension would be blocked by Serbia, which would be supported by the Russian Federation. The general mood in the Organization was downbeat and the closure of the Mission seemed to be almost inevitable. Among other things, it affected the Mission's staffing situation, especially since some participating States started to encourage their secondees to seek other employment. Some international actors – in particular the designated International Civilian Representative (ICR) and the designated Head of the EU Rule of Law Mission – were prompted to start preparing contingency plans to take over elements of the OSCE mandate, its staff, premises, and equipment. The OSCE resolutely opposed such plans, arguing that even if a decision on the non-extension of OMiK's mandate were to be passed, the winding-down period would take at least three to four months, during which time negotiations on the future engagement of the OSCE in Kosovo would commence. The Chair had even started informal consultations on a new mandate of the Mission. It was clear, however, that the OSCE's being a consensus-based organization meant that such negotiations would be unlikely to succeed. In addition, some international actors, including the ICR designated, the USA, and several EU members were concerned about the extent to which the Organization would be able to assist in the implementation of the Comprehensive Status Proposal, given its declared status neutrality and the limitations Serbia, the Russian Federation, and other like-minded states would likely put on the scope of the mandate.

On 17 February 2008, Kosovo declared its independence, and this was soon recognized by a number of OSCE participating States.¹⁰ As expected, the Organization found itself stuck between two realities. Some participating States recognized Kosovo as an independent state and were in favour of the Mission continuing to carry out monitoring and reporting activities, in close co-ordination and co-operation with the International Civilian Office (ICO) and the EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), as suggested in the Comprehensive Status Proposal, as well as continuing and even enhancing its provision of assistance to Kosovo institutions. Others considered Kosovo still to be part of Serbia and insisted that there was no way that the OSCE in Kosovo could undertake activities in co-operation with the authorities that legitimized the independence of the province, but could only co-operate with the legal international presence in Kosovo, UNMIK. In their opinion, the Mission should

9 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Permanent Council Decision No. 835*, PC.DEC/835, 21 December 2007.

10 As of 15 November 2009, Kosovo has been recognized by 35 OSCE participating States: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the UK, and the US.

focus on monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation, paying particular attention to the minority communities, the process governing the return of Serbs and other non-Albanians, and the protection of the Serbian religious and cultural heritage. This opened a number of operational questions for the OSCE Mission. At the same time, it forced the Organization to reconsider the future priorities of the Mission's programme, to find *modi operandi* for its co-operation with other international actors, and to find a balance between monitoring and assistance activities. Status neutrality creates unique challenges and places unique demands on the Organization if it is to be effective while accommodating the expectations of all the participating States.

However, despite the difficulties associated with this situation, OMiK's mandate was not terminated. On 19 February 2008, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Vuk Jeremić, addressed a special session of the Permanent Council.¹¹ Although he did not directly refer to the OSCE presence in Kosovo in his presentation, in the press conference that followed, he stressed that although "the Mission [in Kosovo] could have achieved more, Serbia wants it to stay, despite facing opposition of those, led by the US, who would like to close it". In the discussion that followed his speech, none of the delegations hinted at any intention to activate the mechanism for the non-extension of OMiK's mandate. In the months to follow, it became clear that Serbia would not seek the termination of the mandate as long as the Mission operated according to a status-neutral approach under UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and did not engage in activities that might be perceived as legitimizing the declaration of independence by Kosovo authorities.¹²

By summer 2008, it was evident that despite their differing views, the OSCE participating States had recognized that the Organization's job in Kosovo was not yet complete and that the OSCE Mission would continue the implementation of its mandate based on Resolution 1244 as a component of UNMIK in a status-neutral way. For the moment, the monthly extension of the mandate does not constitute a burden for the Mission's operations, and at this stage there are no indications that any participating State is planning to activate the mechanism for non-extension.

International Environment

At the same time, it was obvious that, following the declaration of independence, the presence of the international community would have to change. However, the process of reconfiguration, whose guiding principles were

11 Cf. *Address to the Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe by H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia*, Vienna, PC.DEL/133/08, 19 February 2008.

12 As formulated in, for instance, the "Non-paper on the role and the activities of the OSCE in Kosovo/Serbia" presented by the Head of the Permanent Mission of Serbia to the OSCE, Ambassador Miroslava Beham, on 14 March 2008.

elaborated in the Comprehensive Status Proposal, was hampered by the UN Security Council's failure to endorse this document as well as by the opposition of the Serb community. On 12 June 2008, the UN Secretary-General laid out his plans for the reconfiguration of UNMIK to reflect the new realities on the ground. The process of winding down UNMIK started in summer 2008, and the plan was to decrease the number of staff from 5,000 to approximately 500 by summer 2009. Besides the transfer of police and judicial personnel to EULEX, this winding down also included the discontinuation of most operations in the field of the UNMIK Department of Civil Administration (DCA). UNMIK maintained only limited "antenna" presences in northern Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Pejë/Peć, Gračanica/Gračanicë, Štrpce/Shtërpçë and Gjilan/Gnjilane. By spring 2009, Kosovo Albanians had become quite outspoken in criticizing UNMIK as belonging to the past, arguing that it should be terminated, despite the fact that the UN presence is related to UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which cannot be changed without an agreement between the permanent members of the UN Security Council. Given Russia's stance, this seems highly unlikely in the near future.

After the declaration of independence, the ICO and the International Steering Group (ISG) were established to oversee the implementation of the Comprehensive Status Proposal. At that time, given the uncertainties regarding the future mandate of the OSCE Mission and its role in the implementation of the Comprehensive Status Proposal, the ICO decided to deploy a limited field presence. The ICO was boycotted by Belgrade and the Kosovo Serb community from the start, on the basis that it was an operation with no legal basis. Under those circumstances, the ICR never assumed the role envisaged by the Comprehensive Status Proposal: i.e. supervising the implementation of the settlement and acting as the final authority in Kosovo, including interpretation of the settlement, taking corrective measures, sanctioning officials or removing them from office, and, last but not least, coordinating the activities of other international actors in Kosovo.¹³

Although the ICO was able to function in the face of difficulties in its relations with Belgrade and the Kosovo Serb community, it was far more difficult for EULEX to do so. Finally, following consultations with Serbian authorities, on 24 November 2008 the UN Secretary-General presented his report to the Security Council containing the results and conclusions of this process.¹⁴ The process was based on the "six-point document", which outlined measures to be taken to ensure stability and continuity in the areas of police, customs, justice, transportation and infrastructure, boundaries, and

13 Cf. United Nations Security Council, *Letter Dated 26 March 1997 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, Addendum, Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement*, S/2007/168/Add.1, Article 12 and Annex IX, Articles 1-2.

14 Cf. United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo*, S/2008/692, 24 November 2008, Section XI, Dialogue with Belgrade (paras 26-29).

Serbian patrimony. While Belgrade accepted the results of the discussions and the arrangements set out in the report, Pristina strongly objected to its conclusions. The UN Secretary-General underlined that EULEX would fully respect Security Council Resolution 1244 and operate under the overall authority and within the status-neutral framework of the United Nations. EULEX would submit reports to the United Nations on a regular basis. On 26 November 2008, the UN Security Council endorsed the report by issuing a presidential statement. This opened the way for the deployment of EULEX, which formally started on 9 December 2008. EULEX was pronounced fully deployed and operational in early April 2009 – the process having been boosted by the transfer of many police officers and judicial personnel from UNMIK to EULEX. However, the discussion on the implementation of the “practical issues” and the six-point plan has not started due to the substantially diverging views of Belgrade and Pristina regarding their modalities and the role of international facilitators.

The report and its endorsement by the UN Security Council resulted in the further weakening of the ICO as the only international actor that does not officially support the “status-neutral” model.

On 11 June 2009, the NATO ministers of defence reaffirmed that KFOR will remain responsible for ensuring a safe and secure environment in Kosovo under Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) as long as necessary and until the UN Security Council decides otherwise. At the same time, they recommended that the 13,800 KFOR troops be gradually reduced to 10,000 by January 2010, with an eventual plan to further reduce their number to 2,500 over the next twelve to 24 months. Furthermore, on 3 August 2009, the NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, stated that he would like to see KFOR reduced to a very small reaction force, or even completely removed from Kosovo, by the end of his term in 2013.

The Mission's Activities

In his report of 12 June 2008, the UN Secretary-General asserted that he expected “the OSCE mission in Kosovo to continue its work as part of the re-configured UNMIK. The presence of the OSCE mission throughout Kosovo will be crucial for the promotion of democratic values at the grass-roots level and the protection of the legitimate interests of all communities in Kosovo.”¹⁵ It was understood that OMiK would remain a distinct component within the overall framework of UNMIK and that its reconfiguration would, therefore, not directly affect the Mission. The Secretary-General’s report of 24 November 2008 made an explicit reference to the enhanced role of the OSCE as a result of UNMIK’s downsizing: “The Organization for Security and Coop-

15 United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo*, S/2008/354, 12 June 2008, para. 13.

eration in Europe (OSCE) will remain a central element of a reconfigured UNMIK through the OSCE mission in Kosovo. Through its field presence, OSCE will continue to play a crucial role in building and monitoring Kosovo institutions and supporting Kosovo minority communities.”¹⁶

Despite the uncertainties regarding OMiK’s future that were evident at the beginning of 2008, the OSCE remains a stabilization factor in Kosovo, ensuring the continuity of the international presence. Although UNMIK’s re-configuration does not directly affect the Mission, the latter’s role is changing. For instance, given that UNMIK has ceased to carry out most of its operations in the field, the OSCE Mission is currently the only civilian international player with a comprehensive field presence throughout Kosovo. OSCE personnel operating through a network of five Regional Centres (Prishtinë/Priština, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Pejë/Peć, and Prizren) are present in all 33 municipalities, so the OSCE is often called the “eyes and ears” of the international community in Kosovo. In addition, the Mission uses its field presence for mediation and problem-solving at the local level, the role played earlier by the UN. However, in some fields (e.g. with regard to the special protective zones) Belgrade has already opposed an increased role for the OSCE at the expense of UNMIK. In general, the Mission’s role could be described as actively monitoring the work of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches at the municipal and central levels of government, and supporting the development of electoral and political systems, the Assembly of Kosovo, municipal administrations, the judicial system, public and private media, civil sector activities, as well as the Kosovo Police Service and other public safety institutions.

Relationships with local authorities and representatives of various communities, above all the Kosovo Serbs, remain key to the Mission’s success. So far, the Mission has benefited from the excellent relationships it has maintained with all communities, as well as the experience borne from ten years of practical work. The crucial time came immediately after the declaration of independence. Initially both Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs were reluctant to pursue a relationship with the OSCE, although for different reasons. Kosovo Albanians were not pleased with the Mission’s “status-neutral approach”, which was perceived as “status-negative”, in particular since the OSCE clearly stated its reluctance to get involved in the implementation of the Comprehensive Status Proposal. However, in the meantime, OSCE status neutrality has been accepted by Kosovo Albanians who have started to better understand the added value of the continued engagement of the Organization in Kosovo. The Mission continues to co-operate with the Kosovo authorities without, however, entering into activities which might be perceived as legitimizing the declaration of independence by the Kosovo Assembly. The relationship with Kosovo Serbs immediately after 17 February 2008 was characterized by mistrust and confusion as to the future role of the

16 *Report of the Secretary-General*, cited above (Note 14), para. 51.

OSCE Mission in Kosovo. Local Serbs, especially those in the north, were clearly waiting for instructions from Belgrade. Unfortunately, conflicting signals were apparently given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Co-ordination Center for Kosovo and Metohija. Finally, co-operation was re-established in early March 2008. This is of particular importance given the complex relationship the Kosovo Serbs have with both EULEX and the ICO.

OSCE Relations with Other Actors

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo was established in a unique way and remains the only OSCE field operation constituting part of a bigger structure. Nevertheless, although the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG), to which OMiK reports, does possess a kind of ultimate authority, the Mission nonetheless enjoys considerably freedom and independence in its activities. While, according to the 12 June 1999 UN Secretary-General Report, confirmed by OSCE Permanent Council Decision No. 305, the OSCE should assist UNMIK as Pillar III under the leadership of the UN, it is necessary to pay attention to the practical mode of co-operation developed over the last ten years, which is based on mutual assistance and a process of consultations. The exchange of letters between the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Ambassador Bernard Miyet, and Ambassador Kim Traavik, Representative of the Norwegian OSCE Chairman-in-Office, dated 16 and 19 July 1999, represented an agreement regarding the allocation of tasks to be undertaken by the OSCE under UNMIK. It confirmed among other things that the institution-building component of UNMIK would be headed by a Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, who would also be the Head of OMiK. In his or her capacity as the Deputy Special Representative, he or she would also report on activities of the institution-building component to the SRSG. The SRSG would also retain overall and ultimate authority for the interpretation and implementation of the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 in relation to its civil aspects. The SRSG would have responsibility for ensuring that all UNMIK activities, including the OSCE-led institution building component, were carried out in an integrated, cohesive, and effective manner.¹⁷ There were occasions when the OSCE was not properly consulted by UNMIK. That was the case, for instance, with regard to the announcement of elections in autumn 2007 – a decision that the OSCE had to implement. Nevertheless, in general the relationship has developed in a constructive way and even improved after the appointment of the current SRSG – Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, who, as the former Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, has a very good

17 Cf. Letter of Ambassador Bernard Miyet, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Keeping Operations, to Ambassador Kim Traavik, Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, 16 July 1999; response of Ambassador Traavik, 19 July 1999, paras 3 and 4.

understanding of the Organization's involvement in Kosovo. The OSCE also continues to operate in the UNMIK framework with regard to such issues as privileges and immunities, personnel, security contingency, etc.

The OSCE has also developed a good relationship with KFOR/NATO at the central, regional, and municipal levels. At the moment, KFOR and the OSCE are the only two organizations with significant field presences. The co-operation between OSCE Municipal Teams and KFOR Liaison Teams has been crucial in this regard. However, the mutual relationship has been affected by NATO's decision to train members of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) at the Kosovo Police School, which was founded by the OSCE. Although the Academy has evolved into the Kosovo Center for Public Safety Education and Development (KCPSED) and has already been transferred to local-authority control, some OSCE participating States have perceived it as a violation of OSCE status neutrality.

The relationship with the EU in its many guises is more complex, but functions nonetheless with a high degree of co-operation and information sharing on the ground. Both organizations spent significant time in the planning phase on ensuring that OMiK and the EU Rule of Law Mission would achieve complementarity instead of duplicating efforts. After the unilateral declaration of independence and Belgrade's initial opposition towards the deployment of EULEX, the OSCE Mission could not establish an official relationship. The situation has changed since the UN Secretary-General's report of 24 November 2008. It established that EULEX would fully respect the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) and operate under the overall authority and within the status-neutral framework of the United Nations. This has opened the way for formal co-operation between OMiK and EULEX. In general, the relationship has developed well, both at the executive level and in the field. At this stage, it is uncertain whether the relationship will need to be formalised by a memorandum of understanding or similar document.

OMiK has also established a good relationship with the European Commission Delegation in Pristina, providing input, for instance, to the Commission's annual progress reports.

The most complex relationship proved to be that between the Mission and the ICO. The need for the Mission's political stance to avoid contradicting the positions of any OSCE participating States extends to its relations with other international actors. The OSCE is therefore not able to enter into any formal agreement with the ICO.

The Way Forward

At the moment, OMiK's activities largely reflect the continuity of the OSCE's involvement in Kosovo. In the last couples of years, the Mission has

continued to improve its efficiency, adapt its structure and management, and take a critical look at its staffing levels (“post table”). The budget has decreased from 33,602,600 euros in 2005 to 26,910,000 euros in 2009 and personnel numbers from 1,122 in 2005 to 857 staff in 2009. It was believed that the transitional period of status discussions was not the appropriate time to substantially change the Mission’s structure. However, in light of the winding down of UNMIK and the full deployment of EULEX and its 3,000 staff members (1,900 international supported by 1,100 local staff), the process of reconfiguration is now being followed closely. The changing international environment in Kosovo provides a timely opportunity to review the Mission’s current activities. Added to this is the increased pressure from some participating States to significantly restructure and/or downsize the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. One should also take into consideration the ongoing staffing problems, due, above all, to the limited efficiency of the OSCE secondment system. The process will focus on assessing the OSCE’s role and achievements in the last ten years. It should inevitably lead to the revision and reprioritization of programmatic activities, in particular in relation to the mandates of other actors in Kosovo.

It is clear that the field presence and human-rights monitoring will remain key elements of the Mission’s overall mandate. What is needed is a clear definition of benchmarks and timelines and an exit strategy for OMiK’s engagement with institutions it has helped to establish. Dialogue will continue with EULEX on OMiK’s involvement in court monitoring and capacity-building in the area of public safety. OMiK will have to assess its involvement in the provision of training and support to the Central Election Commission (CEC) and its secretariat. In addition, there is an obvious need for streamlining and increased cost effectiveness, and adjusting the Mission’s structure to revised tasks and responsibilities in order to better meet new objectives. There is also a clear need to enhance OMiK’s public profile so that other international actors and the public at large become better acquainted with the Mission’s activities.