

Foreword by the Chairman-in-Office

Over the past 34 years, the CSCE/OSCE has shown an unparalleled ability to adapt to Europe's ever-changing geopolitical environment. More than any other regional security organization, the OSCE has reflected the trends and evolution of European security. In 2009, once again, European security stands at a crossroads: The quest for security remains difficult, and the only constant in the international environment is the fluidity of the challenges we face. In this framework, I believe that the OSCE can and should live up to its full potential, serving as a pivot of stability for intra-state and inter-state relations, and a place where all of Europe's security actors can come together to work in concord.

With this in mind, the Greek Chairmanship pledged to promote tirelessly the concept of indivisible, cross-dimensional, and co-operative security throughout Europe – security rooted in respect for international law and the implementation in good faith of all the commitments undertaken within the OSCE framework.

Greece is convinced that there cannot be a lasting peace in wider Europe as long as we continue to view our relations through a zero-sum lens. Bearing this in mind, the first priority of our Chairmanship was to aim towards strengthening consensus among the 56 participating States, as it is through this process that dialogue and better understanding are generated. The Greek Chairmanship was committed from the outset to act as an honest broker in every case.

Greece assumed the Chairmanship of the OSCE following a year of serious crises in the OSCE area. These brought to light the real potential of our Organization, but also its limitations. The conflict in Georgia proved that the OSCE remains an indispensable actor for the provision of early warning and the rapid reaction to crises in our region. However, it also shattered long-standing assumptions about security in the OSCE area, and laid bare the serious issues that remain for the OSCE to address. This Organization is the natural forum for examining the present challenges and future prospects of our common, indivisible, co-operative, and cross-dimensional security. That is why the strategic themes of our Chairmanship in 2009 were to take forward a renewed dialogue on European security and to develop concrete action on the ground.

From the outset, we set core priorities across the three OSCE dimensions, while not shying away from the burning issues of the day. We pursued the OSCE's work in the field of non-military security by focusing on counter-terrorism, border management, policing, and combating organized crime and cyber-threats. The workshops and expert-level meetings we convened had a

wide array of themes, ranging from the role of the media in countering terrorism, to effective law-enforcement co-operation and threats to cyber-defence. These discussions eventually led to Ministerial Decisions aimed at promoting the international legal framework against terrorism, enhancing the OSCE's police-related work, promoting travel document security, and addressing transnational threats. In the second dimension, and with the impact of the global financial and economic crisis being felt across the OSCE area, Greece stood ready to mobilize action wherever the OSCE has the mandate and the tools to act. From the outset, it called on all members of the OSCE family to monitor carefully the fallout of the crisis as it unfolded over the year, in order to address new forms of instability arising in our societies. The dangerous confluence of the economic crisis with rising energy security problems was a prime concern, but the Ministerial Decisions on energy security and migration management are proof of the potential that exists to act in concert. Last but not least, throughout 2009, the Greek Chairmanship sought to focus attention on the three areas of the human dimension, namely human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and democratic institutions, and tolerance and non-discrimination. Combating hate crimes was a priority topic, culminating in the adoption by the Athens Ministerial Council of several relevant decisions based on the Chair's proposals. Greece appointed three new Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office on tolerance and non-discrimination. The Chairmanship also gave particular attention to election-related issues, including election observation, initially addressing issues related to the effective co-operation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE/ODIHR in the field, which indeed improved drastically during the year.

The Greek Chairmanship has sought tirelessly to embed stability and security in the Caucasus region, especially in Georgia. Our efforts followed several strands:

First, Greece committed itself to carry forward the efforts of the previous Finnish Chairmanship to build a consensus on the continuation of the OSCE presence in Georgia. The adoption of the Permanent Council Decision in February on the prolongation of the mandate of the OSCE's military monitors until 30 June led to a new round of intensive consultations and gave hope that further progress was within reach. Regrettably, despite our best efforts, no consensus could be achieved. As a result, one of the largest OSCE field operations in the region closed its doors this year – this, despite the clear need for an OSCE presence to contribute to security and stability in the region, a need that has been recognized by many participating States. Nevertheless, the Greek Chairmanship did not give up and stood ready to continue to facilitate consultations on how to reintroduce a comprehensive OSCE presence in Georgia. I am a strong believer that the OSCE's experience, its diverse toolbox, its inclusiveness, and its comprehensive approach to security

are unparalleled assets for the international community. For those most directly affected by the conflict, these assets are irreplaceable.

A second strand of activity was the work of building long-term stability. The OSCE has acted as a co-chair to the Geneva Discussions on Georgia alongside the UN and the EU, and talks have been held regularly. The discussions in Geneva have led to the establishment of Incident Response and Prevention Mechanisms on the ground. These have been positive steps, and the common front presented in Geneva by the UN, the EU, and the OSCE has been important. Nonetheless, all the hard work remains ahead.

The Greek Chairmanship also sought to rebuild elements of confidence between communities on the ground by giving priority to solving urgent humanitarian issues. The aim here was to improve the living conditions of all the affected populations irrespective of ethnic origin. In this respect, the Greek Chairmanship contributed to the restoration of the gas supply to Tskhinvali and worked to clarify issues related to the supply of water and electricity in and around South Ossetia, as well as the fate of missing persons and detainees. We spared no effort in continuing activities on the ground and enhancing comprehensive security, mainly through the work of the Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, Ambassador Charalambos Christopoulos, the OSCE institutions, and the relevant thematic units in the Secretariat.

One notable success of the Athens Ministerial Council was the fostering of a consensus on a decision and an ambitious wide-reaching declaration charting the way ahead for the “Corfu Process”, the OSCE-anchored dialogue on the future of European security.

The adoption of these documents marked a major step forward for the Organization, and provides a roadmap for the renewed, inclusive, and meaningful dialogue on European security that was launched in June during informal ministerial discussions on the island of Corfu. The Corfu Informal Ministerial Meeting, in turn, built on a process that started during the Helsinki Ministerial Council and continued in Vienna throughout 2009, via the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly meeting, the Annual Security Review Conference, and regular meetings at ambassadorial level during the autumn.

The ambitions of the process are spelled out in the Ministerial Declaration on the OSCE Corfu Process:

The vision of a free, democratic and more integrated OSCE area, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, free of dividing lines and zones with different levels of security remains a common goal, which we are determined to reach [...] Our highest priority remains to re-establish our trust and

confidence, as well as to recapture the sense of common purpose that brought together our predecessors in Helsinki almost 35 years ago.¹

The Ministerial Decision on the Corfu Process provides a roadmap for the way ahead, specifying eight areas the dialogue should focus on: OSCE norms, principles and commitments; conflict resolution; arms control and confidence- and security-building regimes; transnational and multidimensional threats and challenges; common economic and environmental challenges; human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as democracy and the rule of law; enhancing the OSCE's effectiveness; and interaction with other organizations and institutions.

The Corfu Process stresses the importance of comprehensive and indivisible security, as well as the full implementation of the commitments that are its embodiment in practice. It underscores both the continued relevance of existing security institutions and the need to maximize their ability to deal with modern challenges.

Its objectives are threefold: first, to maintain and improve existing structures of European security; second, to enhance co-operative security across the OSCE area through concrete action; and finally, to achieve the maximum implementation of existing commitments, including on conflict resolution and arms control.

The OSCE is the natural "anchor" for this dialogue – thanks to its inclusive membership, its comprehensive concept of security, and its rich experience as a negotiating platform and an actor in the field. The Political Declaration adopted in Athens is a big step on the way. This process, however, has only just started, and I am fully aware that it will be lengthy and demanding. But I know it to be in the best interest of all to conduct this dialogue through the Corfu Process. Open dialogue and concrete action are the two pillars for building a common and indivisible pan-European security space in the 21st century.

1 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Ministerial Council, Athens 2009, *Ministerial Declaration on the OSCE Corfu Process*, MC.DOC/1/09, 2 December 2009, at: http://www.osce.org/documents/cio/2009/12/41848_en.pdf.