
Chairmanship: Switzerland

**REPORT BY
THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE CONTACT GROUP WITH THE OSCE
ASIAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION TO THE TWENTY FIRST
MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Basel Ministerial Council meeting, 4 and 5 December 2014

The 2014 Ukrainian Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group assisted the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship in its activities to promote an open and interactive dialogue between the OSCE and the Asian Partners for Co-operation following a demand-driven approach and responding to the interests and priorities of the Asian Partners.

During the course of the year, five meetings of the Asian Contact Group were held, as well as a joint meeting with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation all of which provided a good platform to further the OSCE's dialogue with the Asian Partners. For each meeting, the topic was selected jointly by the Chairmanship and the Asian Partners for Co-operation, featuring a speaker from a Partner's country. In addition to presentations by the Partner countries, each meeting saw a presentation by experts on topics pertinent to the Asian Contact Group.

The first meeting of the Asian Contact Group, held on 28 February, was dedicated to three topics of interest to the Asian Partners for Co-operation. It started with a presentation on "The Japanese Security Policy" delivered by Ambassador of Japan, Makoto Taketoshi. As one of the eight appointed Coordinators of the Informal Helsinki+40 process, Ambassador of Mongolia, Gunaajav Batjargal then presented the draft working plan of his activities in a capacity of the Helsinki+40 Co-ordinator on the activities aimed at increasing interaction with Partners for Co-operation and with international and regional organizations. The third presentation was given by Ms. Maria Brandstetter, CSBM Officer at the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation Support Section on "The work of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation and the Conflict Prevention Centre in the field of confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs)".

The second meeting of the Contact Group took place on 4 April. During the meeting Ambassador of Afghanistan, Ayoob Erfani, made a presentation on the "Afghan Presidential and Provincial elections 2014". The Ambassador provided an update on the elections, emphasizing that these elections constitute a historic moment for Afghanistan, as they marked the first ever democratic transfer of power in the history of the country based on the 2004 Constitution. Presentations were also given by Mr. Jean-Luc Lemahieu, Director of the Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs (UNODC), on the "The illicit economy of drugs in Afghanistan: status and prospects", by Mr. Richard Lappin, Senior Election Advisor (ODIHR), on the "OSCE/ ODIHR's Election Support Team to Afghanistan and current

developments”, and by Mr. Dennis Cosgrove, Head of the OSCE Border Security and Management Unit, on “border related support by the OSCE in Central Asia”.

The third meeting, on 23 May, focused on protection and empowerment of women and started off with a presentation delivered by Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol, Ambassador of Thailand on the “Thailand and the protection and empowerment of women. Ms. Nathalie Tagwerker, Deputy Head of the Democratization Department (ODIHR), continued with a presentation on “ODIHR’s engagement with the Partners for Co-operation with a focus on women empowerment” and Mr. Marko Letho, Adviser on Gender Issues (OSCE Secretariat), gave a presentation on the “Current activities of the Gender Section and future plans”, outlining six priority areas that the Gender Section is currently focusing on with the participating States and that could further be extended to the Partners for Co-operation. The mentioned priority areas were equal opportunities, violence against women, legal frameworks, conflict prevention (UNSCR 1325), national mechanisms, and political participation.

The 2014 OSCE-Japan Conference, aimed at “Sharing experiences and lessons learned between the OSCE and Asian Partners for Co-operation in order to create a safer, more interconnected and fairer world in the face of emerging challenges”, was held in Tokyo on 16 and 17 June. Co-organized by the OSCE and the Government of Japan, the Conference provided a good platform for exchanging views on all three security dimensions – the politico-military, the economic and environmental and the human dimensions, thus reflecting the OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security. The participants had an extensive exchange of ideas, experiences and best practices and identified several areas where it would be desirable to deepen co-operation between the OSCE. Many thoughtful ideas were presented that could further be explored in interaction with the Asian Partners, namely in the areas related to confidence-building measures, addressing emerging challenges such as security of and the use of ICTs; the global security environment, including energy security and water management, and the role of women in creating a fairer world with a particular emphasis on women’s participation in public, political and economic life, protection of their rights. It was noted that the Conference took place at a time when the OSCE faces the biggest challenge in its history in view of the crisis in and around Ukraine.

The annual joint meeting of the Asian and Mediterranean Contact Groups, held on 17 October, focused on “The role of women in building democracy” with presentations by two speakers. OSCE/ODIHR Gender Adviser, Ms. Ajla Van Heel spoke about the role of women in Parliament and politics in the OSCE region and beyond. OSCE Adviser on Gender Issues, Ms. Ana Lukatela, presented two projects by the OSCE Gender Section; the first was about equality inclusion in mediation processes and the second about mentoring networks. The meeting provided the opportunity for an update on recent developments and the progress achieved by Participating States and the Partners for Cooperation in promoting the active participation of women in domestic public affairs.

The fourth meeting, held on 7 November, focused on the growing phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters as a matter of concern for the OSCE region and beyond. The Ambassador of Australia, David Stuart, presented “Australia’s experience in addressing the foreign terrorist fighter issue’. His presentation was complemented by Mr. Thomas Wuchte, Head of the Action against Terrorism Unit (OSCE Secretariat) speaking about “Foreign terrorist fighters and OSCE counter-terrorism strategic priorities” and herewith explaining the anti-terrorism approach of the OSCE.

The fifth meeting, held on 25 November, focused on how the lessons learnt from the European experience could help shape an Asian multilateral security co-operation. Mr. Sang-hwa Lee, Deputy Director General for Policy Planning of the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Korea presented on the “Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative”. Ms. Frances Mautner-Markhof, Director of the Austrian Center for International Studies in Vienna, presented on the “Application of OSCE experience to multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia”. The third presentation was held by Ambassador Fred Tanner, Senior Advisor to the OSCE Secretary General and Liaison for the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship, about “Building on OSCE expertise and experience: ways forward for increased co-operation in Northeast Asia”.

An important task in advancing dialogue and interaction should remain the follow-up activities based on discussions which took place at the Asian Contact Group’s meetings and the OSCE Asian Conference.

The 2014 Ukrainian Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group expresses its sincere appreciation to all the Asian Partners for Co-operation and the participating States for their meaningful and dedicated engagement in promoting this partnership as a platform for open dialogue dedicated to a result-oriented co-operation and mutually enriching exchanges of experiences.