

**REPORT BY THE  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE CONTACT GROUP WITH THE  
MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION TO THE  
EIGHTEENTH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

At the Astana Summit meeting in December 2010, the participating States recognized that the security of the OSCE area is “inextricably linked” to that of its neighbouring regions. The uprisings that affected the southern Mediterranean region throughout 2011 highlighted this connection. In response, the Lithuanian Chairmanship moved the situation in the southern Mediterranean to the top of the OSCE agenda. The Mediterranean Contact Group has played a key role, aiming for a dialogue with full participation by both Partner and participating States, and seeking ways to bring tangible, practical benefits to the participants.

The OSCE Partnership Fund makes possible the participation of Partner States in relevant OSCE activities and supports specific projects. In 2011, the Mediterranean Contact Group drew on the resources of the Partnership Fund to address emerging challenges in the region, including corruption and environmental security.

The fight against corruption is recognized as one of the factors underlying the unrest in the southern Mediterranean region. With support from the Partnership Fund, the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities organized a round-table meeting in Vienna in July 2011 on the role of civil society, including the media, in preventing, detecting and prosecuting corruption. The round table facilitated an exchange of innovative practices and models between and among OSCE participating and Partner States, identifying areas of progress as well as persistent challenges where action is needed. It also helped the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation to prepare for the civil society segment during the fourth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, held in Marrakech in October 2011.

The Mediterranean has been identified as one of the regions most vulnerable to environmental threats to security, with the potential for serious repercussions for Europe. In 2011, the OSCE Permanent Council approved a proposal to use the Partnership Fund to support a series of workshops on environment and security issues in the southern Mediterranean as part of the follow-up to the seminar on environmental security in the region that took place in 2007 in Valencia.

The Mediterranean Contact Group met five times during 2011, discussing a wide range of security issues and possible avenues for OSCE support for peaceful transitions in the region. Experts from the OSCE and other international organizations addressed the group, and representatives of Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia briefed it on unfolding events and national reform programmes. The Contact Group meetings also provided an

opportunity for briefings on OSCE activities in areas of particular relevance to the Mediterranean Partners in all three dimensions.

At the first meeting of the Contact Group (18 February 2011), a representative of the Lithuanian Chairmanship presented the priorities and plans of the Chairman-in-Office for the year in areas of special relevance to the Mediterranean Partners, stressing the OSCE's willingness to be more actively engaged in co-operation. As a follow-up to the Mediterranean Conference in Malta in 2010, the Chairmanship presented a perception paper on the need for more meaningful and practical follow-up, as well as the need to focus, prioritize and streamline the work of the Contact Group. He encouraged the Partners to make full use of the Partnership and to present explicit requests for assistance by the OSCE. The Chairperson of the Contact Group presented the Group's work plan for 2011, which focused on common interests between the OSCE and the southern Mediterranean regions in the three dimensions, and ways of operationalizing proposals for assistance and practical measures to deepen the engagement with Partners and produce more results. The meeting also included a discussion of developments in Egypt and Tunisia, and participating States offered expressions of solidarity and support for peaceful transitions across the region. The Group was also briefed on the OSCE Border Security and Management National Focal Point Network, and the Partner States were encouraged to participate in it.

The second meeting (25 March 2011) was principally devoted to issues in the economic and environmental dimension. The Partners welcomed a background paper presented by the OSCE Chairmanship on possible OSCE assistance to the Partners, especially since it recognized that assistance must be tailored to the specific needs of individual States, and could include assistance on economic and migration issues as well as electoral assistance. The Group also appreciated briefings on Morocco's constitutional reforms and Egypt's referendum on constitutional amendments. A representative of the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities shared ideas on co-operation between his Office and the Mediterranean Partners in the areas of energy security, migration management and the Valencia follow-up project on environmental security in the Mediterranean region.

The Contact Group's third meeting (13 May 2011) was devoted to the human dimension and featured a presentation by the Director of the ODIHR, a briefing on the Human Dimension Committee and an update on Algeria's ongoing reform processes. The Lithuanian Chairmanship also discussed the visit to Tunisia in April by the Lithuanian Foreign Minister and the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, in the context of which they had discussed elections, migration, corruption and other areas where the OSCE could potentially provide assistance with representatives of the Tunisian Government and civil society, as well as with the UN co-ordinator. They had been accompanied by experts from the ODIHR and the Secretariat, who had held meetings on democratic reform and human rights. The Director of the ODIHR proposed areas for potential co-operation in the third dimension, including: electoral processes, assessment of legislation on political parties, independent judiciary, national human rights instruments, advice and capacity-building on combating terrorism while promoting and protecting human rights, and tolerance and non-discrimination. It was stressed that, for the OSCE to be activated, a clear request from the Partner State concerned would have to be expressed.

The fourth meeting (15 July 2011) focused on the politico-military dimension, and included briefings by the Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre and the Chairperson of the Forum for Security Co-operation. The OSCE Chairmanship also discussed an ODIHR

working visit to Morocco in May that had aimed to identify areas for co-operation in the first dimension and the OSCE anti-corruption round table in Marrakech. The Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre welcomed enhanced co-operation with the Partners and encouraged them to participate in OSCE discussions on security in the OSCE region and beyond. He discussed three OSCE documents of particular relevance to the Mediterranean region: the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security; the OSCE Plan of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), focusing on the fight against proliferation of illicit SALW; and a catalogue of confidence- and security-building measures, entitled *Stabilizing Measures for Localized Crisis Situations*. He also noted that the OSCE promoted implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and suggested holding joint regional workshops with the Mediterranean Partners and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs. The Chairperson of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation explained that the Forum focused on core mandates and activities of the politico-military dimension and fostered discussion of a broader perspective of collective security in the OSCE region focused on security in regions bordering the OSCE area.

The fifth meeting (12 September 2011) focused on co-operation with other international organizations, and featured three guest speakers: the head of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, the director of External Relations at the Council of Europe and the head of the Mission of the League of Arab States (LAS) in Vienna. The first two described their organizations and areas in which they could potentially provide assistance to the Partner States. The LAS representative mentioned that the OSCE Secretary General and the LAS Secretary General had met in Cairo in September and discussed ways in which the two organizations could enhance co-operation to facilitate the sharing of OSCE expertise and experience with the southern Mediterranean region. An OSCE participating State also provided information on the Union for the Mediterranean. All agreed on the need for closer co-operation and the sharing of best practices and lessons learned.

The annual joint meeting of the Asian and Mediterranean Contact Groups (21 July 2011) provided an opportunity for a broader exchange of views on developments in regions bordering the OSCE area, including the southern Mediterranean, as well as updates on recent OSCE events, such as the annual session of the Parliamentary Assembly. It also included a discussion of OSCE activities in the areas of police reform, good governance and freedom and reform of the media.

The Mediterranean Conference in 2011, held in Budva, Montenegro, on 10 and 11 October, focused on "Democratic Transformation: Challenges and Opportunities in the Mediterranean Region". It covered issues in all three dimensions, including the role of the police and the armed forces in democratic societies; the promotion of human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law; and the strengthening of good governance. The Conference confirmed that the OSCE participating and Partner States shared fundamental principles and a commitment to enhancing dialogue and co-operation with each other, and reconfirmed the consensus of the Astana Summit meeting that the security of the OSCE area and that of the Partners for Co-operation were "inextricably linked." It also recognized the vital role of civil society in the development of modern, free, secure and humane societies.

The discussion at the Conference on the police and armed forces called for a country-specific approach to reform tailored to the needs and situation of each country.

Training should be a priority to ensure that reform was effective. Co-ordination among international actors and key stakeholders was also crucial. The participants shared experiences with community policing, the establishment of human rights departments in the police as well as of national human rights institutions, and the enhancement of interaction between the police and armed forces and the civilian population. The group made a number of concrete proposals, such as translation into Arabic and French of key OSCE publications on police reform, and discussed the possible adoption by the Partners of an instrument similar to the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security.

The discussion on democracy recognized that the Mediterranean could serve as a bridge between shared values. Stability must not be purchased at the price of liberty, and respect for human rights could help to bind participating and Partner States more closely together. The OSCE had had decades of experience with the democratization process, and a number of participating States offered to share their own experience with democratic transition with the Mediterranean Partners. Such transitions were complex, challenging and sometimes unpredictable, and the OSCE admittedly did not have all the answers, but it was ready and willing to share its experience with the Mediterranean Partners, and also to learn from their experience. However, concrete forms of assistance must be defined to ensure that the OSCE provided the kind of support the Partners actually needed. The Partners expressed the desire for intensified co-ordination among international organizations, but also made a plea for patience.

The Mediterranean is also a common economic area where enhanced partnership could benefit the whole region. Corruption hinders development and undermines popular trust in government, and that can contribute to instability and social unrest. Money-laundering services corruption, as well as organized crime and all forms of trafficking, and also helps the financing of terrorism. Democracy, transparency in public processes and the fight against corruption are critical to encouraging foreign and domestic economic investment, and good governance is essential to prosperity, stability and security. The OSCE promotes transparency and the fight against corruption by supporting the rule of law and judicial reform. It also helps to raise awareness about and provides advice on adapting national legislation to comply with the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Environmental security also ties in with economic development, and the Partners were urged to join the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.

Democratic transition is a complex, multidimensional, long-term process, and “one size does not fit all”. While the culture and priorities of each country are unique, learning from both the successes and the failures of other countries can help make the process go faster and more smoothly. The OSCE is ready to share its know-how and experience with democratic transitions, including supporting concrete measures and projects to strengthen democratic institutions, ensure freedom of expression, strengthen civil society and stimulate economic growth. While the OSCE’s relationship with the Partners for Co-operation must be firmly rooted in partnership, it is important to recognize that changes in the southern Mediterranean are being driven from within. Thus, while the OSCE can advise, assist, and offer lessons learned and best practices, it cannot impose its priorities, policies or vision. That is up to the peoples of the Mediterranean themselves.

The Irish Chairmanship of the Contact Group would like to conclude by thanking the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation for their commitment to working toward the norms

and principles of the OSCE, especially during a challenging period of transition. It is also grateful to the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship of 2011 for its commitment to supporting the democratic transitions of the Mediterranean Partners. The Irish OSCE Chairmanship in 2012 will continue the OSCE's commitment to the Mediterranean region, and looks forward to working closely with the incoming Ukrainian Chair of the Mediterranean Contact Group.