



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Office of the Secretary General
External Co-operation Section



2021 OSCE ASIAN CONFERENCE
on
“Strengthening security for all and by all:
Synergies and opportunities for co-operation between Europe and Asia”

15 June 2022

**Co-organized by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden and
the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**

Consolidated Summary

Table of contents

1	General information	3
1.1	Venue	3
1.2	Participation	3
1.3	Timetable and organizational modalities	3
1.4	Agenda	4
2	Summary of the opening session	8
3	Reports by session rapporteurs	11
3.1	Session 1: The role of women in building confidence, peace and security – sharing experiences and lessons learned between Europe and Asia	11
3.2	Session 2: Climate-related challenges to security and opportunities for co-operation – building on the Stockholm decision	15
3.3	Session 3: The role of civil society in strengthening co-operation between the OSCE and Asian Partners	19
4	Summary of the closing session	22

1 General information

1.1 Venue

The conference was organised by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden with the support of and in close co-operation with the OSCE External Cooperation Section/OSCE Secretariat.

Owing to the COVID-19-related situation and the associated restrictions, physical attendance in the Neuer Saal of the Hofburg was limited to two participants from each of the Vienna-based OSCE delegations. Other participants were invited to join the conference via a video teleconferencing platform (Zoom).

1.2 Participation

1.2.1 Participation was in line with the provisions of Permanent Council Decision No. 1438 on the agenda, timetable and organizational modalities of the 2022 OSCE Asian Conference.

1.3 Timetable and organizational modalities

1.3.1 The conference began with an opening session lasting from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Wednesday, 15 June 2022, and ended at 6.30 p.m. on the same day. The main part of the conference was structured into three thematic sessions, precluded by an opening session, which was chaired by H.E. Ambassador Ulrika Funered, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the OSCE and Chairperson of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group. During the opening session, keynote speeches were delivered by H.E. Ms. Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden; H.E. Ambassador Adam Hałaciński, Permanent Representative of Poland to the OSCE and Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council during the Polish 2022 OSCE Chairmanship; H.E. Mr. Bujar Osmani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia; H.E. Ms. Helga Schmid, Secretary General of the OSCE; and H.E. Mr. Sarun Charoensuwan, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Thailand.

1.3.2 Each session had a moderator and a rapporteur.

1.3.3 The working language was English.

1.3.4 Arrangements were made for press coverage.

1.3.5 The rules of procedure and working methods of the OSCE were applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the conference.

1.4 Agenda

Wednesday, 15 June 2022

10–11 a.m. **Opening remarks** (*live-streamed*)

- **H.E. Ms. Ann Linde**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden
- **H.E. Ambassador Adam Halaciński**, Permanent Representative of Poland to the OSCE, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council, Polish 2022 OSCE Chairpersonship
- **H.E. Mr. Bujar Osmani**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia
- **H.E. Ms. Helga Schmid**, Secretary General of the OSCE
- **H.E. Mr. Sarun Charoensuwan**, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Thailand

Chair: **H.E. Ambassador Ulrika Funered**, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the OSCE, Chairperson of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group

Rapporteur: **Ms. Tina Kapica**, Embassy of Japan in Austria

11 a.m.–12.30 p.m. **Session 1: The role of women in building confidence, peace and security – sharing experiences and lessons learned between Europe and Asia**

This session focused on:

- Promoting women’s full and equal participation in all phases of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding;
- Regional women’s networks and platforms as tools for strengthening the role of women in conflict resolution;
- Implementing national action plans on United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 to promote the role of women in peace and security;
- Increasing women’s representation within the security services.

Moderator: **H.E. Ambassador Tuula Yrjölä**, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, Deputy Head of the OSCE Secretariat

Speakers:

- **H.E. Ms. Christine Clarke**, Ambassador of Australia for Women and Girls
- **Mr. Dong-jun Lee**, Director of the Human Rights and Social Affairs Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea
- **H.E. Mr. Thomas Byrne**, Minister of State for European Affairs of Ireland
- **Ms. Kateryna Levchenko**, Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy, Ukraine
- **Ms. Petra Tötterman**, Secretary-General, Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (“Woman to Woman” Foundation)
- **H.E. Ms. Åsa Regnér**, Deputy Executive Director for Policy, Programme, Civil Society and Intergovernmental Support, UN Women

Discussion

Rapporteur: **Mr. Sebastian Gahnström**, Counsellor, Permanent Delegation of Finland to the OSCE

12.30–2 p.m.

Lunch break

2–3.30 p.m.

Session 2: Climate-related challenges to security and opportunities for co-operation – building on the Stockholm decision

This session focused on:

- Development and utilization of early warning mechanisms to prevent, mitigate and adapt to the negative impacts of climate change;
- Strengthening co-operation to identify and address climate-related challenges and build climate resilience, including through partnerships on technology and innovation;
- Raising awareness of climate-related challenges and promoting the effective participation of women in decision-making processes in the field of climate change.

Moderator: **H.E. Ambassador Igli Hasani**, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Speakers:

- **Mr. Junichiro Otaka**, Director, Climate Change Division, International Cooperation Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

- **Mr. Norbert Gorißen**, Deputy Special Envoy for International Climate Action, German Federal Foreign Office
- **Mr. Florian Krampe**, Director of the Climate Change and Risk Programme, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)
- **Mr. Hans Guttman**, Executive Director of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center
- **Dr. Tavid Kamolvej**, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, and Deputy Governor of Bangkok, Thailand
- **Dr. Ugur Turan**, expert on confidence-building measures in the environmental dimension, Secretariat of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA)

Discussion

Rapporteur: **Mr. Peter Sonnenhol**, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Germany to the OSCE

3.30–4 p.m.

Coffee break

4–5.30 p.m.

Session 3: The role of civil society in strengthening co-operation between the OSCE and the Asian Partners

This session focused on:

- Civil society’s role in the processes of democratic institution-building and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Exploring opportunities to support and expand the existing dialogue and co-operation between the OSCE and the Asian Partners for Co-operation through additional channels provided by academia, non-governmental organizations and other representatives of civil society.

Moderator: **Ms. Kateryna Ryabiko**, First Deputy Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

Speakers:

- **Ms. Klotilda Bushka**, Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs, Public Administration and Human Rights, Albanian Parliament

- **Mr. Kyriakos Hadjiyianni**, Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
- **Ms. Jamila Afghani**, Afghan Women's Network

Discussion

Rapporteur: **Ms. Emma Logan**, Second Secretary, Permanent Delegation of the United Kingdom to the OSCE

5.30–6.30 p.m.

Closing remarks

Closing statements by delegations

- **H.E. Ambassador Ulrika Funered**, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the OSCE, Chairperson of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group
- **H.E. Mr. Marcin Czapliński**, Deputy Permanent Representative of Poland to the OSCE, Polish 2022 OSCE Chairmanship

Moderator: **Ms. Marietta König**, Senior External Co-Operation Officer, Office of the Secretary General, OSCE Secretariat

Rapporteur: **Ms. Maguelone Laval**, Junior Professional Officer, Office of the Secretary General, OSCE Secretariat

6.30 p.m.

End of the conference

2 Summary of the opening session

Report by Ms. Tina Kapica, Embassy of Japan in Austria

The opening session of the conference was chaired by **H.E. Ambassador Ulrika Funered**, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the OSCE and Chairperson of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group. After welcoming all the participants, Ambassador Funered stressed that the OSCE Asian Partnership for Co-operation had been of particular relevance, as reflected in the 2020 Tirana Ministerial Council Declaration on Co-operation with the Asian Partners (MC.DOC/2/20), and that it was highly valued throughout the OSCE. This year's conference was taking place against the backdrop of the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, which was affecting many strands of the OSCE's work, including the OSCE Asian Partnership for Co-operation. Ambassador Funered therefore extended her thanks to all those involved in the preparation of the event.

The first speaker of the opening session, **H.E. Ms. Ann Linde**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, noted that participation in the OSCE Asian Conference was a sign of the shared commitment of the OSCE and its Asian Partners. Ms. Linde emphasized that the concept of comprehensive security remained the best tool for defending the European security order, which was of particular importance given the grave security situation in the region. Accordingly, the conference would address issues that were central to achieving sustainable security, both in the OSCE area and among the Partners for Co-operation.

The first session would focus on gender equality and the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. Ms. Linde noted that while much had been achieved since the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, much still remained to be done. In that respect, she expressed her deep concern about the situation of women in Afghanistan.

The second session would focus on climate-related challenges to security. Ms. Linde reminded participants of the groundbreaking decision adopted at the Stockholm Ministerial Council meeting in December 2021 that gave the OSCE a mandate to work on climate change. As an issue of global concern, climate change was highly relevant in the context of the OSCE Asian Partnership for Co-operation.

Finally, the last session of the conference would shine a spotlight on the participation of civil society in the building of democratic institutions. As it had not been possible to hold an OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting since 2019, it was more important than ever to continue discussions on how co-operation could help to support civil society in the OSCE area.

Ms. Linde reminded the participants that the Organization's work affected not only the OSCE area but also the surrounding world. In that regard, she recalled the shared duty of acting together to stop the aggression against Ukraine, which not only had local consequences but was also impacting global security, not least through a food security crisis. Ms. Linde further recalled the negative developments in Afghanistan and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. She stressed that the aforementioned challenges could only be overcome by working together, reaffirming commitments and holding those to account that violated them.

Ms. Linde concluded by expressing her hope that the conference would help to further strengthen co-operation between the OSCE and its Asian Partners.

H.E. Ambassador Adam Halaciński, Permanent Representative of Poland to the OSCE and Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council, addressed the participants on behalf of H.E. Mr.

Zbigniew Rau, OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland. He stressed that security was both a primary goal and a natural need of societies and nations. In an interconnected world, where security challenges were becoming increasingly complex and international co-operation was vital to achieve a secure and safe environment for citizens, the OSCE Asian Partnership for Co-operation offered a unique framework for discussion, particularly at times of crisis. Ambassador Hałaciński argued that strengthening international law was the best security guarantee for all States. He pointed out that over three months had passed since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and reminded the conference participants that the aggression, which had been a breach of international law, threatened the very existence of a rules-based international security order and the principles of multilateralism. The evident fragility of the international order highlighted the urgent need to strengthen international co-operation on security issues and to reaffirm the commitment to peaceful coexistence and rejection of the use of military force. Ambassador Hałaciński stressed that there had to be shared priorities to prevent further erosion of the rules-based security order and that acting now to promote acceptance of those rules and principles was in the interests of all. In that respect, three topics of crucial importance would be discussed at the conference, namely the women, peace and security agenda, climate change and the role of civil society in strengthening international co-operation.

Ambassador Hałaciński stressed that it was essential to adhere to the commonly agreed commitments in all three dimensions of security. This year's OSCE Asian Conference was an opportunity to learn about best practices and identify areas in which improvements were possible.

H.E. Mr. Bujar Osmani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, thanked Sweden for its efforts in reinforcing synergies between Europe and Asia through the OSCE. His recent visit to Japan had served as further confirmation that people across continents shared similar challenges, hopes and fears, which was especially true in the current complex geopolitical context. There was consensus that the Russian aggression against Ukraine represented a threat to both Europe and the Indo-Pacific region, and beyond. Building on the 2020 Tirana Ministerial Council Declaration on Co-operation with the OSCE Asian Partners, countries across the continents should share the burden and responsibility of active co-operation. Referring to the situation in Afghanistan, Mr. Osmani expressed North Macedonia's support for further OSCE engagement in the region to mitigate risks and address challenges. Since the risks for collective security were common and entangled, they needed to be tackled through a collective and co-ordinated transcontinental approach. He called for a solution-driven multilateralism as a way of responding to the aforementioned challenges and safeguarding the OSCE's principles and commitments. Mr. Osmani underscored the need to harness the potential of the OSCE and the Asian Partnership to create synergies and opportunities for strengthening co-operation.

H.E. Ms. Helga Maria Schmid, Secretary General of the OSCE, stressed that although the war against Ukraine remained the Organization's main focus, the work carried out together with its Partners for Co-operation was still essential. The war against Ukraine has consequences across the OSCE's work, including in the context of the topics highlighted by the conference. At a meeting of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group held in April, participants discussed women's empowerment in disaster risk reduction and emergency responses, with a particular focus on the consequences of the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine and concluded that women were disproportionately affected by both climate change and attacks on civilians. At the same time, women play a vital role in shaping a peaceful and more sustainable future. Ms. Schmid welcomed the focus of the conference's first session on the role of women

in building confidence, peace and security. She pointed to the OSCE's long history of supporting gender equality and referred to the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2004), which has been followed by over forty Permanent Council and Ministerial Council decisions in key areas across the three dimensions of security that emphasized the need for gender mainstreaming and the importance of women's equal participation. She also highlighted the OSCE Networking Platform for Women Leaders including Peacebuilders and Mediators, launched in December 2021, and the 2022 OSCE-UNODA Scholarship for Peace and Security training programme as examples of the OSCE's engagement with the women, peace and security agenda.

As for the second session, Ms. Schmid stressed that climate change remained one of the most pressing issues of the time and was a priority for the OSCE as well. She recalled the landmark Stockholm Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/21 (MC.DEC/3/21) on strengthening co-operation to address the challenges caused by climate change, which provides the OSCE with a clear mandate for future work in this area. While the decision called for co-operation among the participating States on climate-related issues, it also encouraged the Partners for Co-operation to join in that endeavour. The conference provided an opportunity to share the results of the work done so far, to address potential security risks stemming from climate change and to learn about the Asian Partners' experiences in that field.

Finally, with regard to the topic of the third session, Ms. Schmid emphasized that the OSCE had always acknowledged the crucial role of civil society in addressing challenges as part of a comprehensive approach to security. She mentioned the conference of the Civic Solidarity Platform held in parallel to the 2021 OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Stockholm, noting that it had brought together more than 90 human rights and peacebuilding non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from across the OSCE area. She further recalled the 2020 Tirana Ministerial Council Declaration on Co-operation with the OSCE Asian Partners, which highlights how civil society representatives can help facilitate dialogue between the OSCE and the Asian Partners.

H.E. Mr. Sarun Charoensuwan, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, thanked Sweden as the holder of the Chairpersonship of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group and the OSCE Secretariat for successfully convening the conference. He stressed the timeliness of its overall theme, noting how the looming food and security crises were examples of shared security challenges in an interdependent world. It was up to the global community to work together in rethinking diplomacy with a view to restoring and strengthening global security. Mr. Charoensuwan singled out three points that were important to Thailand in that regard. First, it was necessary to pursue comprehensive security with people at the forefront – indeed, Thailand had itself continuously advocated a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach. Second, there was a need for more, not less, multilateralism. Third, interregional co-operation had to be fostered, and that was where the OSCE Asian Partnership for Co-operation played an instrumental role. To date, Thailand was the only Member State of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that belonged to the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group. Mr. Charoensuwan concluded by calling for intensified dialogue between Europe and Asia and by suggesting that further areas for enhanced co-operation be identified.

3 Reports by session rapporteurs

3.1 Session 1: The role of women in building confidence, peace and security – sharing experiences and lessons learned between Europe and Asia

Report by Mr. Sebastian Gahnström, Counsellor, Permanent Delegation of Finland to the OSCE

As moderator of the session, **H.E. Ambassador Tuula Yrjölä**, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC), welcomed the emphasis placed on women, peace and security by the Swedish Chairpersonship of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group. She underlined the critical role of women peacebuilders, who were working to build a sustainable future in many places, not least in Ukraine. Unfortunately, women's expertise remained an underutilized resource. The participation of women at all levels of decision-making in peace processes and conflict management should be a priority for all, since it helped to deliver better results. She pointed to the OSCE Networking Platform for Women Leaders including Peacebuilders and Mediators recently launched by the Secretary General, which was set to become a key initiative with an emphasis on empowerment and mentoring.

Increasing women's overall participation in the security sector should be a priority as well. Considerable success had been achieved in increasing the number of women in, for instance, border guard services and the police. The OSCE field missions had been doing a lot of good work to that end. Women also needed to be more closely involved in efforts to combat gender-based violence. Responses against such violence were more effective when women participated in their design.

The first speaker of the session, **H.E. Ms. Christine Clarke**, Ambassador of Australia for Women and Girls, stressed that gender equality was a priority for her country in the Indo-Pacific region, but also globally. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there had been further slippage in the promotion of gender equality around the world, and that had to be reversed. Australia had finalized its second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in 2021, which aimed at ensuring the full participation of women in peace and security processes. That was an important goal because outcomes were more enduring and resilient when women were fully involved in such processes. Women and girls, in all their diversity, should therefore be encouraged to fully contribute to their communities, especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Ms. Clarke singled out the conflicts in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Myanmar and Syria as particularly challenging in relation to the rights of women and girls. The Russian invasion of Ukraine had taken a devastating toll on Ukrainian civilians, and most of the refugees were women and children.

Mr. Dong-jun Lee, Director of the Human Rights and Social Affairs Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, explained that his country was in the process of implementing its third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. The plan focused on gender mainstreaming across government activities, including gender-responsive budgeting and conducting gender assessments of public policies. The aim was to increase the share of women in decision-making positions in the Government, and the results achieved so far had actually surpassed the original expectations. Gender equality was prioritized in foreign policy. The Republic of Korea supported a range of initiatives, including initiatives under the United Nations framework, to combat sexual violence in conflict. Tailored training in gender awareness was provided to Korean national staff before they were deployed on international

missions. Mr. Lee noted that his country was actively encouraging women to take part in such missions.

Mr. Thomas Byrne, Minister of State for European Affairs of Ireland, underlined the devastating impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on women and girls, and reiterated his country's condemnation of the invasion in the strongest possible terms. Referring to the Northern Ireland peace process, he observed how Ireland had first-hand experience of the important role that women could play in such efforts. Peace processes had to be representative of the societies involved: only then could agreements be sustainable. It was therefore not merely beneficial but essential to involve women and civil society representatives from the very outset and at every level of peace processes. Yet, women were still excluded from or not heeded in most such processes. Only 6 per cent of mediators, 13 per cent of negotiators and 6 per cent of signatories were women. Mr. Byrne emphasized that more must be done to translate the vision underlying the women, peace and security agenda into action on the ground. Mediators, organizations and communities had knowledge of local circumstances, and their involvement was therefore crucial. Additionally, it was important to create spaces for women mediators and activists to learn from one another. Ireland strongly supported the work of the OSCE field missions and the Conflict Prevention Centre to promote the participation of women in peace processes.

Ms. Kateryna Levchenko, Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy of Ukraine, reminded the participants that Russia's war against Ukraine had started already eight years earlier with the illegal annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Donbas. The war had further exacerbated existing gender inequalities in her country. Ukraine had approved its second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in 2020. Although meant to run until 2025, it was clear that the plan had to be updated to take into account the acute challenges arising from the war – in particular, such challenges as gender-based violence and sexual violence in conflict, the need to combat trafficking, and upholding the rights of women in security and defence structures. The plan would also have to include new target groups, including people who were currently under the jurisdiction of other countries.

Ms. Levchenko mentioned that the United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict had visited Kyiv recently and signed a framework agreement on co-operation. The areas in which co-operation would be stepped up included referral mechanisms and support services for the victims of conflict-related violence, along with the development of national policies and programmes. Ms. Levchenko argued that the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda was more effective when it was undertaken as part of regional implementation frameworks. The OSCE was well placed to lead efforts on advancing that agenda. Ukraine supported the idea of developing an OSCE regional action plan on women, peace and security.

Ms. Petra Tötterman, Secretary-General of the Kvinna till Kvinna (“Woman to Woman”) Foundation, emphasized that women's participation in peace processes could not be secured without proper funding and support, which included listening to organizations involved in defending women's rights. National action plans on women, peace and security should include local women's organizations not only in the drafting but, more importantly, in the implementation phase. Civil society could play a highly effective role in early warning and conflict resolution. NGOs also performed a lot of important prevention-related work, which was often neglected. The women, peace and security agenda was about preventing conflicts, not just about making wars safer for women. A broader range of issues needed to be included in the agenda, including violent extremism, terrorism, climate change and trafficking. Ms. Tötterman stressed that peace could not be built through military spending. Afghanistan was a

case in point: military spending there had far exceeded development aid, yet it had been ultimately unable to protect the rights of Afghan women and girls. In both Afghanistan and Ukraine, women had to be part of any solution to the ongoing conflicts. The international community should do its utmost to ensure that women's organizations could contribute to peace processes. That included providing adequate funding to local women-led NGOs.

Ms. Åsa Regnér, Deputy Executive Director for Policy, Programme, Civil Society and Intergovernmental Support at UN Women, highlighted the importance of the partnership between the United Nations, the OSCE and ASEAN. The past few years had been “a dark and heavy period” for the women, peace and security agenda, as reflected in the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, sexual violence during Russia's war against Ukraine, and events in Myanmar and Ethiopia, to name just some of many examples. Women were taking action to protect the rights of other women – something that could be seen in Ukraine and Afghanistan every day. Ms. Regnér underscored the need for diversity and inclusion in the law enforcement agencies. Only 6 to 20 per cent of police officers in the ASEAN countries were women, yet research had shown that the overall effectiveness of a police force could be improved by increasing the proportion of women. That enhanced the perception of police forces' legitimacy in communities, and provided better results in countering sexual and gender-based violence.

Ms. Regnér pointed out that despite the challenges, there were also positive trends, such as the increasing number of women mediators' networks. Regional organizations had played an important part in setting up those networks. The number of national action plans on women, peace and security had increased to around 100 altogether, though less than 40 per cent of them actually had a budget. Unless words were followed up by funding, progress would continue to be slow. Analysis of national action plans revealed that the prevention and participation pillars had become stronger, as had disaster response and actions to counter violent extremism. However, cyber threats, climate change and artificial intelligence were not properly addressed in such plans.

A representative of **Japan** emphasized that his country was deeply concerned about the situation in Ukraine, especially in the light of reports about sexual violence in conflict. It was vital to foster gender awareness in the security sector in particular. The women, peace and security agenda was an important pillar of Japan's foreign policy. He noted that the role of women was crucial in disaster response and reconstruction as well. The OSCE had made a key contribution to enhancing implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, but greater efforts were still required also in co-operation with the Asian Partners.

The **European Union** representative recognized that the Asian Partners were directly confronted with one of the most challenging security situations in the world. The situation in Afghanistan was of the utmost concern to the European Union, which had launched the Afghan Women Leaders Forum to help ensure the participation of women in national dialogue. Throughout Ukraine, women in all their diversity were defending their country and putting their lives at risk. There should be a gender-responsive approach to all efforts to respond to the Russian invasion. The systematic inclusion of a gender perspective was crucial at all stages of the conflict cycle. Local organizations and women human rights defenders had considerable knowledge and should fully participate in the design of solutions. That was essential to bring about an inclusive and long-lasting peace.

A representative of the **United States of America** pointed out that Russia's attack on Ukraine had led to ripple effects around the world, not least in large swathes of South-East Asia owing to the increased food insecurity. The war had had a dramatic impact on women in Ukraine, many of whom were on the front lines, since women accounted for up to 15 per cent of the Ukrainian armed forces. A renewed focus on women in conflict and on combating trafficking

in human beings and sexual and gender-based violence was necessary. The United States was convinced that it was incumbent on the rest of the world to support Ukraine.

A representative of the **Russian Federation** emphasized that his country valued the co-operation with the Asian Partners at the OSCE. There had been considerable progress on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 since its adoption. It was important to create equal opportunities for women and men, through which they could both fulfil their potential. However, it was not a question of “a blind pursuit of numbers”. The OSCE had its contribution to make in advancing equality between women and men, yet the co-ordinating role continued to belong to the United Nations and should not be duplicated. The Russian Federation interpreted the United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security as pertaining only to conflict prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding efforts: they were not universal tools for promoting women’s participation in all areas of society. The Russian representative said that combating gender discrimination and violence against women remained priorities for his country at the national and international level.

A representative of **Canada** called for more action to increase women’s participation in peace processes. Attacks against human rights defenders and activists were on the rise worldwide. Women were often sidelined or invisible in peace processes. Young and diverse voices needed to be included to make such processes more effective. Canada strongly condemned the use of sexual violence as a tool of war during Russia’s attack on Ukraine. A gender perspective had to be incorporated into all efforts to put an end to the war.

In her closing remarks, **Ms. Clarke** noted that the challenges related to the women, peace and security agenda were common to countries across the OSCE area and in the Indo-Pacific region. Working together was therefore key, and the women, peace and security agenda, together with related United Nations Security Council resolutions, provided a robust framework for such work. In that respect, funding and fully implementing national action plans was essential.

In his concluding remarks, **Mr. Byrne** said that Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine and its impact on women had cast a shadow over the entire conference. However, the discussion had shown that there was no doubt that better outcomes could be achieved in peace processes if women participated in them, and also that involving women more closely in conflict prevention would lead to there being fewer conflicts as such.

3.2 Session 2: Climate-related challenges to security and opportunities for co-operation – building on the Stockholm decision

Report by Mr. Peter Sonnenhol, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Germany to the OSCE

As session moderator, **H.E. Ambassador Igli Hasani**, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, introduced the session by pointing out that climate change was one of the most serious global challenges of the twenty-first century, which could only be addressed through a joint international effort. Following the 2021 Stockholm Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/21 on strengthening co-operation to address the challenges caused by climate change, the OSCE was well positioned to make an important contribution in that regard, in particular through its ongoing project work. Mr. Hasani announced that the cross-regional project on climate and security, which was already under way in South-Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, would be initiated in Central Asia at a regional workshop in Almaty in July. He expressed his Office's readiness to share the experience and best practices generated by the project with the Asian Partners for Co-operation. Moreover, he encouraged the speakers to address such key topics as the development and use of early warning mechanisms to prevent, mitigate and adapt to the negative impacts of climate change; the need for greater co-operation to identify and address climate-related challenges and build climate resilience, including co-operation through technology and innovation partnerships; the need to raise awareness of climate-related challenges; and the importance of promoting the effective participation of women in decision-making processes in the field of climate change.

Mr. Junichiro Otaka, Director of the Climate Change Division at the International Cooperation Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, condemned Russia's attack on Ukraine, which needed to be addressed collectively by the international community. He stressed that swift action was required to keep the target of limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels within reach. Japan was actively contributing, together with other countries, to disaster mitigation and efforts to improve the climate resilience of vulnerable countries, especially small island developing States, across the Pacific region and beyond. Japan was also contributing to climate finance through the Green Climate Fund, among other mechanisms. His country had put climate change on the Group of Seven agenda during its presidency in 2016, and it had joined the United Nations Group of Friends on Climate and Security in 2022. He regretted that the United Nations Security Council had failed to adopt a draft resolution on climate and security. Since Japan and the OSCE participating States were all affected by climate change, they should continue their dialogue on that important topic.

The second speaker, **Mr. Norbert Gorißen**, Deputy Special Envoy for International Climate Action at the German Federal Foreign Office, underscored the role of climate change as a risk multiplier. Climate-related food insecurity in many parts of the world would be further exacerbated by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which was a major grain exporter. He emphasized that Germany was in the process of becoming independent of fossil energy sources and regarded renewable energies as "freedom energies". His country was working on the development of regional climate risk assessments, data-driven early warning systems, transboundary water management and anticipatory humanitarian actions, including some projects in Central Asia.

Mr. Gorißen also stressed Germany's willingness to promote the OSCE's important complementary role in combating climate change. He called for jointly breathing life into the new Stockholm Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/21 on strengthening co-operation to

address the challenges caused by climate change – specifically by developing, in close co-ordination with the Asian Partners for Co-operation, concrete climate action plans. Similarly, he welcomed the intention of OSCE Secretary General Helga Schmid to convene a high-level conference on climate change. The existing OSCE project on climate and security should become part of a broader approach to addressing climate security risks. Germany welcomed the expansion of the project’s scope to include Central Asia, which was a region of common responsibility and concern. The disappearance of large parts of the Aral Sea highlighted the water-energy-food nexus. Germany was ready to share the experience gained in its Green Central Asia initiative with the OSCE to support that joint endeavour.

The next speaker, **Mr. Florian Krampe**, Director of the Climate Change and Risk Programme at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), elaborated on the close links between peace and the environment, both of which were in crisis. The Russian attack on Ukraine was a further example of the deteriorating international security situation, the consequences of which were exacerbated by the intensifying climate crisis. Climate change itself did not create conflicts but, rather, increased existing insecurities. International co-operation was necessary to achieve substantial “peace dividends”. In particular, climate finance had to reach conflict-affected regions and population groups more effectively.

Mr. Hans Guttman, Director of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), explained that Asia was particularly affected by environmental disasters, including rising water levels. Food security was already a major challenge and it was being aggravated by climate change, political instability and the Russian war against Ukraine. The ADPC sought to strengthen early warning systems in various regions of Asia, including transboundary regions – for example, to provide early warning of floods near riparian zones or of droughts in rural areas. He stressed that the ADPC was working to increase the participation of women in disaster risk reduction and in combating gender-based violence.

Dr. Tavid Kamolvej, Assistant Professor at Thammasat University and Deputy Governor of Bangkok, informed the participants about disaster and emergency management in Thailand, and specifically in the capital, citing the examples of earthquakes and tsunamis, the explosion of a chemical factory and potential flooding in the event of a dam breach. She emphasized the importance of having not only national and local emergency plans in place, but also well-informed and prepared local communities so that they could collaborate effectively with professional relief workers.

The last panellist of the session, **Dr. Ugur Turan**, an expert on confidence-building measures in the environmental dimension at the Secretariat of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA), stated that, with its 27 member countries, CICA covered large parts of Asia. Ensuring an adequate and fair supply of water and energy, strengthening environmental protection and improving connectivity were particularly important challenges for the region. He emphasized that CICA helped to promote peace, security and prosperity in Asia through a consensus-based multilateral approach.

In the discussion that followed, representatives of **the European Union, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation** described climate change as the greatest global challenge of the twenty-first century. Rising temperatures and sea levels, prolonged droughts, devastating forest fires, climate-induced migration flows and limited access to water were creating instability and threatening to undermine prosperity in the OSCE area and Asia.

Representatives of **the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom** stressed that food insecurity caused by the negative impacts of climate change on agriculture had been

further exacerbated by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The blockade of Ukrainian grain and wheat exports in the Black Sea ports had been driving food prices up, pushing people into poverty and destabilizing entire regions. Acts of war were massively affecting Ukraine's natural environment and threatening civilian nuclear power reactors.

There was broad consensus that the OSCE had an important complementary role to play in addressing climate change and its impact on peace and stability, especially following the adoption of the Stockholm Ministerial Council decision on climate change. Moreover, the OSCE was an important regional platform for dialogue and co-operation with the Asian Partners. Such co-operation, especially on innovative technologies and through science diplomacy, could help to identify and address climate-related challenges early on and, thereby, strengthen climate resilience.

A representative of the **European Union** welcomed the OSCE's willingness to share its experience from ongoing project work on climate change and security with its Asian Partners. It was essential to address the climate-food-energy-water nexus. In the energy sector, fossil fuels should increasingly be replaced by new forms of low-carbon energy. To that end, the European Union was promoting investments in energy efficiency, renewable energies and the production of clean hydrogen. With regard to water security, the European Union and its Member States were already supporting initiatives, particularly in Central Asia, to protect mountain glaciers; to promote transboundary co-operation on the management of rivers and water resources, hydropower use, sustainable consumption and production; and to improve ecosystems and sustainable living in the Aral Sea region. The European Union had also launched a comprehensive initiative in Central Asia on water, energy and climate change that sought to promote energy transition. The European Union called for a gender perspective to be included in all climate-related activities.

A representative of **Slovenia** underlined the importance of water diplomacy, not least in supporting human rights and with regard to the particular role of women in water procurement, especially in developing countries. Slovenia had launched a Group of Friends on Water and Peace in Geneva.

A representative of the **United States** stressed that his country was increasingly taking climate change into account in its foreign and security policy and that, in addition to its direct impact on security, climate change was also a significant threat multiplier. Looking ahead, he argued that climate aspects should be taken into account in all areas of government action and that climate resilience had to be further improved.

A representative of the **Russian Federation** said that his country was a responsible member of the United Nations climate processes and underlined its readiness to continue co-operation on climate change at the OSCE on the basis of the relevant Stockholm Ministerial Council decision, especially on the topics of water and energy. Russia, however, was opposed to the creation of unfair trade barriers for reasons of climate protection, and it was particularly concerned about the introduction of a "carbon border tax". Food insecurity caused by climate change had been further exacerbated by sanctions, but Russia remained a reliable supplier of grain. Since it had established humanitarian shipping corridors, the accusations against Russia were groundless.

A representative of **Ukraine** contradicted the above account, arguing that Russia's war of aggression against her country was the root cause of the current bleak situation in relation to food security in particular.

The Secretary General of the **Economic Cooperation Organization**, **H.E. Mr. Khusrav Noziri**, reported on regional efforts to combat climate change and associated risks, and urged

developed countries to honour their funding commitments, since they were responsible for the greater part of historical greenhouse gas emissions. He emphasized the importance of the principle of shared and differentiated responsibility as a basis for addressing climate change.

3.3 Session 3: The role of civil society in strengthening co-operation between the OSCE and Asian Partners

Report by Ms. Emma Logan, Second Secretary, Permanent Delegation of the United Kingdom to the OSCE

As session moderator, **Ms. Kateryna Ryabiko**, First Deputy Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), set the scene by highlighting why support to civil society was at the core of the OSCE's work, including its work as a central actor in the interface between democracy and peace. Only with the full participation of civil society could there be genuine democracy. The OSCE participating States had reaffirmed their readiness to share best practices through various existing formats across the three dimensions of security. Civil society – a broad concept that encompassed NGOs, academia, media and other institutions – was already using various channels to support and expand existing dialogue between the OSCE participating States and the Asian Partners for Co-operation.

Ms. Ryabiko noted that the challenges of recent years, such as COVID-19 and the measures put in place to respond to the pandemic, had made it difficult for civil society to carry out its activities, even though they were needed more than ever. The Russian Federation's attack on Ukraine and the crisis in Afghanistan were threats to comprehensive security. Civil society could play an important role by providing a sense of what was happening on the ground. Civil society organizations contributed to the OSCE's work on political groups and gender equality. Their knowledge of local areas was essential when planning OSCE activities in response to a crisis. Providing civil society with appropriate platforms would help to create a safer and more enabling environment for such engagement.

The second speaker, **Ms. Klotilda Bushka**, Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs, Public Administration and Human Rights of the Albanian Parliament, spoke of the decline of democracy worldwide. Civil society acted as a voice of the people, and if that voice went unheard, democracy was in great danger. She underlined the importance of paying attention to and consulting civil society actors at all times. Protecting democracy and human rights was an ongoing challenge, and hard-won results in that field could easily be lost.

Ms. Bushka referred to examples from Albania showing how civil society was being included in decision-making, notably through a 2014 resolution of the Albanian Parliament which had laid the basis for close co-operation with civil society groups. The recently established National Resource Centre for Civil Society in Albania was intended to allow civil society representatives to engage in dialogue with State representatives during the drafting of new laws. Moreover, Albania had created a government agency tasked with promoting the active participation of civil society. That agency was helping relevant organizations to represent the views of the public and to be vocal on specific topics. While the COVID-19 pandemic had forced much of the valuable dialogue with civil society to shift online, technology had been used to adapt to the situation and there were various signs that such dialogue continued to be successful. For example, the number of legislative amendments adopted in Parliament after being proposed by a civil society group was rising: in 2020, they had accounted for 35 per cent of the total number of 700 amendments. Additionally, three new laws were being developed in response to proposals by civil society organizations.

The third speaker, **Mr. Kyriakos Hadjiyianni**, Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, highlighted why co-operation with civil society experts and organizations – which were often at the forefront of efforts to provide services to vulnerable or marginalized groups – was particularly important for national parliaments in

law-making, representation and oversight. NGOs could provide useful advice on domestic policies, for example. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly served as a platform for dialogue and often heard from outside experts on topics across all three dimensions, ranging from arms control, through environmental issues, to counter-terrorism.

Turning to the international situation, Mr. Hadjiyianni noted that Russia's invasion of Ukraine had dealt a heavy blow to a multilateral system that was already under strain. At a time when government-to-government relations were tense, co-operation between civil society groups could have an important stabilizing role.

The final speaker of the session, **Ms. Jamila Afghani** of the Afghan Women's Network, described the difficulties faced by the Afghan people, particularly women, since the Taliban takeover in 2021. The international community had left the people of Afghanistan on its own by, inter alia, closing banking systems and embassies. The Afghan Women's Peace and Freedom Organization (AWPFO) was currently working in 34 provinces with the aim of bringing together marginalized groups as part of a peaceful society. Over the previous nine months, it had provided financial support to small businesses and women human rights defenders, and assisted refugees with internal relocation. The AWPFO was devising strategies to work with the Taliban and successfully collaborating with religious scholars in the promotion of a narrative about human rights. Ms. Afghani called on the international community to stand with the women of Afghanistan, who were deprived of employment and other opportunities to contribute to society. She deplored the lack of action following the various statements of concern that had been made, and called for lessons to be learned from the crisis. The international community should continue to engage in dialogue on Afghan women's rights. She concluded by arguing that human rights needed to be separated from political rights so that they could be better protected.

During the subsequent discussion, a representative of the **European Union** stressed that civil society activists had played a crucial role in the protection of human rights. Against the backdrop of Russia's war against Ukraine, civil society was more important than ever, and OSCE participating States had a responsibility to ensure the protection of human rights defenders and activists. Particular attention needed to be paid to women and LGBT activists. The European Union had adopted guidelines for civil society participation in political decision-making.

A representative of **Thailand** said that his country had adopted a whole-of-society approach to security. Thailand was home to various domestic civil society organizations and advocated a multi-stakeholder society. It had undertaken efforts to realize sustainable peace and security. In that respect, the Thai Government reaffirmed its support for freedom of expression. A holistic security approach required close co-operation between the Government and civil society. Thailand's work with NGOs to promote women's engagement in the health sector was given as an example. Thailand supported the OSCE's endeavours to ensure that civil society could play a strong role.

A representative of the **United States** condemned the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine and its suppression of civil society activists. Such suppression was also taking place in Belarus. Respect for human rights was being undermined. In Afghanistan, civil society likewise faced a dire situation. The United States was deeply concerned about restrictions on the media in Afghanistan, as well as about the curtailment of women's rights and freedoms. He thanked the Asian Partners for their support in drawing attention to those issues. States with a robust civil society were freer and, as a result, more secure.

A representative of the **United Kingdom** condemned President Putin for waging war not just on the Ukrainian people, but on the very right of people to decide their democratic future and protect themselves. The role of civil society in the OSCE's work dated back to the Helsinki Final Act. Civil society could help to inform policy design and act as a "pressure relief valve", whereby dissent was transformed into constructive public debate. Local and international civil society organizations had been at the forefront of exposing the abuses taking place in Ukraine, providing valuable evidence from the ground and combating disinformation campaigns launched by the Russian Federation. The United Kingdom was deeply concerned about the case of Vladimir Kara-Murza, a dual British-Russian national who had been imprisoned in Russia. Civil society activists should be afforded protection when speaking out. Turning to Asia, she condemned the detentions of and threats against civil society activists since the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. In response to the crackdown of 27 March on the broadcasting of international programmes, the United Kingdom had joined in the issuing of a statement by the Friends of Afghan Women Ambassadors' Group which deplored the erosion of rights for journalists and media institutions in that country.

A representative of the **Russian Federation** underlined the value of constructive dialogue between civil society and governments. In the modern world, civil society organizations were often called upon to solve a variety of international problems that could not be dealt with by States alone. He commended the many civil society organizations that pursued a noble mission and had great expertise in their subject area. Russia had some 200,000 civil society organizations, among which he mentioned Liza Alert, a volunteer movement that searched for missing people, focusing on children. He also highlighted the value of religious organizations. However, all organizations had to adhere to the law: trying to act against the State was unacceptable. While underlining the contribution of NGOs working on humanitarian issues, he concluded by pointing out that organizations should, in general, refrain from incorporating a political agenda into their activities.

4 Summary of the closing session

Report by Ms. Maguelone Laval, Junior Professional Officer, External Co-operation Section, Office of the Secretary General, OSCE Secretariat

Ms. Marietta König, Senior External Co-Operation Officer at the Office of the OSCE Secretary General, moderated the closing session of the conference. Before giving the floor to the panellists, she gave delegations the opportunity to make some closing remarks.

A representative of **Australia** thanked Sweden for having organized the conference in the difficult context created by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Australia valued its participation in the Asian Partners for Co-Operation Group. The OSCE played a critical role in the regional security order, and she duly reaffirmed her country's commitment to core OSCE documents and principles. The OSCE area and the Indo-Pacific region were interconnected in many ways. Afghanistan was currently suffering from one of the gravest humanitarian crises in recent history. She deplored the fact that some participating States kept acting in violation of their international commitments. International organizations had to continually seek ways of holding accountable those who breached the international order.

A representative of **Türkiye** emphasized that the OSCE and its Asian Partners had many values in common. Following the adoption of the 2020 Tirana Ministerial Council Declaration, which called on the OSCE to strengthen its ties with the Asian Partners, co-operation was more essential than ever. Given that this year's OSCE Asian Conference was taking place against the backdrop of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the OSCE had to redouble its efforts to ensure the protection of civilians, especially women and girls. Indeed, the women, peace and security agenda should be one of the Organization's priorities. The OSCE could do more in that respect throughout the entire conflict cycle. Moreover, the OSCE had to continue addressing climate change as part of a broader push for decarbonization. Sustainable development should not, however, be impeded by the green transition. Additionally, Mr. Civelik assured the participants that Türkiye would play its role in addressing the Afghan crisis.

Ms. König then passed the floor to the panellists of the closing session.

H.E. Ambassador Ulrika Funered, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the OSCE and Chairperson of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group, thanked all the speakers and organizers for their contributions. She summarized the outcomes of the three sessions. At the first session, the speakers had expressed a clear concern that implementation of the women, peace and security agenda had been stalling worldwide in recent years. Existing inequalities had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and conflicts across Europe and Asia were putting women at serious risk of sexual and gender-based violence. The consequences of Russia's full-scale military attack on Ukraine, along with those of the conflict in Afghanistan, were mentioned as particularly alarming examples. At the second session, the panellists had agreed on how climate change was one of the most serious global challenges of the twenty-first century and, what is more, one that could only be addressed through a joint international effort. Following the adoption of the 2021 Stockholm Ministerial Council decision on climate change, the OSCE was well positioned to make an important contribution in that regard. Finally, at the third and last session, the panellists had underlined the importance of giving consideration to civil society actors at all times, since protecting democracy and human rights was a long-term challenge. Ms. Afghani had poignantly described the difficulties faced by the Afghan people, particularly by women, and had outlined her organization's work to support those women.

H.E. Mr. Marcin Czapliński, Deputy Permanent Representative of Poland to the OSCE, reminded the participants that the Asia-Pacific region was an important part of the global

security system. The region was faced with security challenges and threats emanating from global trends in international relations, just like the countries of the OSCE area. However, the OSCE had the advantage of being able to count on reliable Partners for Co-operation and on established formats to discuss with them those pertinent issues. Poland in its capacity as the holder of the OSCE Chairmanship in 2022 and of the Chairmanship of the Asian Partners for Co-operation Group in 2023 would make every possible effort to foster and advance dialogue between the Asian Partners and the OSCE participating States in the spirit of multilateralism.