Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Statement by the OSCE Secretary General,
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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to be here. The OSCE needs the support and interest of parliamentarians, academics, and civil society, and I thank the Finnish Institute for International Affairs for providing me with this opportunity to discuss the problems the OSCE is confronted with. The history of the OSCE is closely intertwined with that of Finnish diplomacy. In Dipoli and twice in Helsinki, Finland shaped initiatives that helped to address crucial issues for greater Europe through the invention and formation, first of CSCE, then of OSCE.

These past glories throw a special light over Finland's forthcoming chairmanship – which occurs at another critical moment in the history of greater Europe. Finland has expressed its willingness to serve; the country will also be called to lead.

Today's greater Europe is not easy to encapsulate: events unfold quickly, existing arrangements and institutions are called into question. Drawing up a list of key emerging questions provides perhaps the best way to explore the complexity of the current situation. The OSCE is a good vantage point from which to observe the flux occurring in greater Europe and more widely.

Please allow me, therefore, to address some of the questions that are on the table, and the role that the OSCE may play in addressing them, in an analytic mode. I wish to explore seven questions.

First, which arrangements are required to provide political-military security across the OSCE area?

A year ago, this question would barely have been mentioned. Most OSCE States were satisfied with existing CFE and CSBM arrangements and considered Russia's complaints in this area as an irritant to be addressed by Moscow's own implementation of remaining Istanbul commitments. Similarly, the US thought it could proceed with the preparations for the deployment of Missile defence capabilities on the basis of previous discussions with Russia.

Through the voice of President Putin in Munich, echoed by Minister Lavrov before the Permanent Council, these comfortable assumptions have been shaken.

By July, after an emergency conference on the CFE treaty, Russia had initiated the process of suspending its implementation of the CFE treaty and had proposed to recast the MD plan with its full participation. The question of improvements in the Vienna Document gained additional relevance in this context.

In essence, these developments mean that some of the foundations of greater Europe's hard security architecture are now under question.

A first round of contacts has not made it possible to determine what the framework and the opening gambit for the discussion of Russia's concerns would be. Russia has not yet said whether it would expect a full renegotiation of the revised CFE treaty or if it wished for the definition of a specific framework for co-operation on MD.

The field is open -- raising the prospect of a suspension of Russia's participation in the CFE treaty on the 12th of December and new announcements to be expected if preparations for MD proceed.

Some have argued that binding arrangements in the field of hard security are less necessary than they used to be. Others, however, have expressed concern that the framework of co-operation in greater Europe is being undermined, and that the legitimate security concerns of Russia and its friends should not be ignored.

For itself, the OSCE has always relied on hard security treaties as an important underpinning to its broad security concept. It remains a natural forum for discussing those issues, whether in the Joint Consultative Group or in the Forum for Security Co-operation. The Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE is inevitably involved in such debates, given his broad responsibilities across all dimensions of security.

A second question that arises is more specific, but no less important: What future role is there for the OSCE in South-Eastern Europe?

Approximately half of OSCE resources are allocated to its six Balkans field operations. For instance, Kosovo remains today the largest OSCE operation, with more than a thousand people working as an integral part of the UNMIK presence.

The mandates of all OSCE operations seek to build democracy at the grass roots level, to help insure the protection of minorities and to build effective state institutions -- the objective being to overcome the legacy of conflict and, in practice, to assist indirectly in these countries' European and Euro-Atlantic integration efforts. In each case, the field missions reflect a complex chemistry of interaction between different actors in the host countries, the objectives of donors and the decisions of the 56 participating States.

How much longer such a broad presence will be required is an open question.

The OSCE is addressing complex and demanding social, cultural and institutional problems, which require a benevolent external presence to achieve even modest progress. However, governments in the region are eager to show that they have moved beyond such difficulties and are ready to be part of the Euro-Atlantic framework. For instance, Croatia is seeking to prove that the OSCE mission will soon have fulfilled its mandate, including regarding the return of refugees, and also that new war crime trials monitoring arrangements can be found.

These pressures are contradictory.

The question of the conditions for closing OSCE offices in the Balkans may prove to be a bone of contention within the EU itself and be complicated further by regional political developments.

In Kosovo, the continuation of OSCE involvement will depend on two conditions: the desire of a host country to accept this and the support of all 56 states. Should the status of Kosovo not be based of a new UNSC resolution, the OSCE may lack the consent of some States to remain. The OSCE presence and its effectiveness will also depend on the willingness of all Kosovars to retain it in place, since it would be a distinct part of an international presence.

In an optimistic scenario, the OSCE would phase out progressively in a co-ordinated manner across the region -- as mandates are fulfilled, and coordinated with the progress that these countries make towards NATO and EU membership.

But circumstances could decide otherwise, leading to a disorderly series of closures. At the least, this would raise questions about the commitment of the participating States to implementing OSCE values throughout this region. The Finnish chair will have to address these issues.

A third question is whether the promotion of democracy through election observation will remain at the core of such an inclusive Organisation as the OSCE?

For the majority of participating States, a central purpose of the OSCE is to assist democracy in countries that are still in transition. The ODIHR is a key actor by means of its continuous dialogue with States before, during and after their elections. Field missions, acting through a variety of programmes and projects agreed by the host countries, are another key tool.

The OSCE approach is broadly low-key and pragmatic. There is no strategy as such for democracy promotion -- either at the level of the Organisation or for specific States. OSCE contributions on the rule of law, freedom of the media and national

minorities are not, therefore, explicitly related to the promotion of democracy, even if they play a significant role.

Over the last 15 years, the presence of OSCE observers has become accepted as a badge of respectability and a willingness for dialogue. The Election Observation Mission to Kazakhstan last month was a sign of how solid this perception is.

This focus has been criticised by a group of States for some time. The criticism has become increasingly assertive. The arguments are well known: asymmetry in the election observation efforts, partiality of the election observers, and an imperfect methodology of election observation. These points have been put forward at many OSCE ministerial meetings, with the request that they receive concrete answers. The answers provided thus far are seen by these countries as less than satisfactory.

Partly as a result, an alternative election observation system has been developed within the CIS. Certainly, overall consensus on a key aspect of OSCE activity is affected. One may see the way opening to an *à la carte* approach to election observation, with States approaching elections negotiating arduously on the conditions for OSCE observers.

A fourth question concerns the OSCE contribution to the fight against new threats.

It has become customary for OSCE Ministerial Councils, often at the initiative of Chairmanships, to extend the mandate of the Organisation to include activities relating to new threats – including counter-proliferation, the struggle against terrorism, police activities, the fight against trafficking in human beings, environmental security, drug-trafficking, organised crime, border management.

The OSCE *modus operandi* has been to seek to raise awareness of problems and enhance international co-operation by organising conferences that bring together key players from official and civil society backgrounds. In so doing, the OSCE relies on small permanent teams located in the Secretariat to act as catalysts to discussions and their follow-up. These teams assist the work of field offices, and are heavily

dependant on extra-budgetary contributions and the secondment of personnel by a small number of States.

While these teams do not have sufficient expertise or manpower to assume more permanent responsibilities, there have been notable success stories, such as the recent meeting on the private/public partnership in fighting terrorism. The OSCE has taken the lead among regional organizations in assisting UN agencies in many of the areas concerned. OSCE activities have been useful also in associating Russia, the South Caucasus and Central Asian States with the US and EU. Certainly, the OSCE has developed niche expertise and fostered relevant networks in areas where some participating States need assistance. And OSCE actions in these areas have helped in the process of establishing more balance between the three dimensions.

However, a fragmented approach to new threats has yielded a constant flow of meetings of unequal relevance and impact, most of them instigated by a limited group of sponsors. In practice, OSCE activities here tend to be sponsored by one or more key players. Up to a point, these sponsors complement each other and are mutually supportive. However, as long as such diversified initiatives continue, it will be difficult to review and consolidate what has become a maze of mandates, formats and operations.

It will be difficult also to highlight priority areas where the OSCE may provide real value-added – however much this is necessary in a context of limited resources, since participating States now insist on a zero-growth budget, and competing international organizations.

It remains an open question, therefore, whether the OSCE has the necessary critical mass to make an autonomous contribution to addressing new threats or to serve as a focal point for deeper international co-operation. Finland will have to help it find solutions to these questions in a highly constrained resource context.

Fifth, how far can OSCE develop the relationship with OSCE Partners?

The question matters, as the concept of partnership was inscribed in the Helsinki Final Act and has remained an important factor. However, it has become clear also that the expectations of the two sets of Partners are different.

The Asian Partners are a group of committed democracies, genuinely interested in sharing OSCE values and exemplary in their participation in OSCE events. There is potential for creating OSCE-like processes in North-East Asia, should the relations with North Korea approach normalcy. Discussions tend to be on an equal footing with solid interest shown by the Partners.

One open question relates to Afghanistan: should OSCE become directly involved in helping this country to improve its democratic institutions and on such security issues as police training and border management?

At least one participating State has a keen interest in this, but the proposal remains far from consensus. Still, an approach coordinated between participating States and Asian Partners to help Afghanistan, taking advantage of existing OSCE programmes in Central Asia and from the Secretariat, could be considered.

The Mediterranean Partners are more difficult to engage -- because of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and because many of them seem to be attracted to some of the enshrined OSCE values more than others. This has made the regular holding of seminars problematic and their agendas difficult to set. Exchanges with these Partners have tended to focus on issues of common interest -- such as migration, and questions related to tolerance and dialogue between cultures.

This last area especially is one where the OSCE has supported continuous dialogue among its own participating States, initially in response to the re-emergence of anti-Semitism among its participating States. For the Mediterranean Partners, it is discrimination against Muslims that matters. The OSCE has organized important meetings combining the two issues, along with discrimination against other creeds. It

has also established a modest if permanent monitoring mechanism through the three Personal Representatives of the CiO.

However, the current approach is experiencing difficulties in moving towards encouraging participating States to take effective measures in tackling these phenomena.

Mobilising the potential for dialogue with the Mediterranean Partners is important, because it tests the OSCE capacity to reach out by promoting its values and by making adjustments to take into account neighbouring societies to which it is closely linked. The cohabitation of different societies and cultures in a tightly-knit world is a central question the OSCE faces. Special efforts to render relations with the Mediterranean Partners effective and action-oriented are vital. Finland has already been actively involved in this, it will be called upon to contribute further.

My sixth question concerns the wider role of the OSCE as an international institution. What will become of the OSCE?

The success of the OSCE can be measured by its impact as a model and as a tool box for other international organizations. The importance of Human Dimension values as the basis for co-operative security was first asserted within the OSCE, before being adopted by NATO and the EU. Other multilateral institutions were created, such as the CSTO and the SCO, that focus more exclusively on the hard security dimension. Many initiatives explored first within the OSCE have been implemented by other international organizations, particularly within the UN family. The overlap between the OSCE and the Council of Europe requires careful management.

Some of these same organizations are developing in directions that lead them to assume functions the OSCE has performed – the role of the EU in the Western Balkans is a case in point, as well as in Central Asia and the South Caucasus.

In a context of such competition, the *raison d'être* of the OSCE is sometimes lost.

The OSCE remains a process, without constituting documents or legal personality, dependant on the will of the Chairmanship for executive direction. It has a light bureaucracy, a de-centralised mode of operation and a consensus-based decision making process. The deployment of modern management techniques within the Organization remains very recent. The issue of the OSCE's transformation into a full-fledged international organization with a charter is controversial. As a values-based institution, the process for designating future chairmanships has become problematic.

The OSCE is unique amongst international institutions for its fragility. In order to work, the Organization requires constant engagement and negotiation. The burden on the CiO is particularly heavy, because the Chair must combine the management of current crises with the weight of keeping the machinery functioning.

In this sense, the discrepancy between the tasks States entrust to the OSCE and its limited capabilities poses a problem. The Organization will face increasing difficulty in delivering expected results unless it is provided with a degree of stability, clear priorities and continuous political, financial and human support.

The OSCE as a project cannot afford to be left to benign neglect. Each participating State should have an understanding of what it expects from OSCE and how much support it is willing to provide in order for the OSCE to promote its priorities and insure the balanced work of the organization on the basis of compromise and mutual respect.

Such strategic thinking is not always readily available among participating States that rely on overworked bureaucracies. Participating States and their groups should be encouraged to make their commitment to the OSCE more apparent, including financially, and provide it with fresh ambitions such as defining the relevance of OSCE values in today's world.

The greatest asset of the OSCE remains its capacity to generate new approaches to current problems through a collective discussion across greater Europe. Civil society should also be called upon to contribute more to these debates. For now, however,

institutional strengthening will have to wait until the emergence of a period of renewed consensus. Finland will have to help in keeping the institution going until then.

My final question is speculative, but worth raising: How will the OSCE survive a deep rift in its midst?

The OSCE *acquis* today is the product of three phases of evolution. A first pioneering phase that produced the Helsinki Decalogue, and that was security-centred and the product of compromise between differing views. A second period occurred in the first half of the 1990s, when an ambitious body of commitments was defined and institutions were created. This was followed by the more recent development of OSCE activities to focus on operations and new threats.

Participating States have divergent perceptions of this evolution.

One important group has argued that the second phase had led the Organization to become un-balanced with regard to the focus of the earlier phase. The same group has argued that adjustments should occur in the way that the Human Dimension is implemented and that the Organisation should be more centralised and controlled by participating States. This group would prefer a return to a more security-focussed forum, which would also progressively close field operations as they complete their mandates.

These positions are opposed by a number of other participating States.

Between the two positions, many States hold more nuanced views. They recognise the merit in some of the ideas expressed by the first group, while retaining overall solidarity with the second one. These States would be ready to consider adjustments in existing practice, if change does not interfere with OSCE core activities.

The key question is whether this third group can manage to broker compromises that would be acceptable to the first and second groups. If so, the Organization could retain some of its key un-controversial activities while 'muddling through' on

the more contentious ones. Precisely such a balance has been struck during past Ministerial Councils thanks to the active involvement of successive CIOs, which basically sympathised with the third group.

However, if such a delicate balance proves impossible to strike, more drastic scenarios are conceivable.

Difficult issues are converging on the Madrid Council meeting – to name a few, the CFE treaty, Kosovo, the Kazakh chairmanship bid, election observation issues, trends in the protracted conflicts, possible closure of the mission to Croatia, a decision on scales of distribution.

One could witness a breakdown in the capacity of the OSCE to reach consensus on decisions or declarations or even future chairmanships. This could in turn lead to an erosion of the Organization, which might then revert to acting basically as political forum for discussion, with a few thematic missions and reduced institutions.

Such a development would represent a loss for greater Europe. It would also signal the polarisation of participating States along dividing lines of values and interests.

All Chairmanships must both act and steer the OSCE; this is never easy. Through troubled times in the past, Finland succeeded in helping to shape the project launched in Helsinki and to ensure that it survived and, indeed, prospered.

As it faces the challenges next year, needless to say, Finland may count on the full dedication of all the OSCE institutions.

You managed very well in the past; we trust you to lead us successfully again.