



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Workshop “Towards a Strategy for Reconciliation in the OSCE Area”

Vienna, 18 December

Closing Session

*Closing Statement by Ambassador Adam Kobieracki
Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre*

Dear Colleagues,

It is an honor to deliver the closing remarks of the final session of this Workshop.

We had a solid exchange today on the importance that reconciliation holds for conflict resolution and peace processes and for advancing OSCE work in establishing a security community.

I thank all participants, including keynote speakers, panelists, and moderators, as well as the audience, for their insights and for their contributions to our discussions.

We should be inspired by the best practices about which we have heard today, even though, we should be realistic and sensitive to the challenges that remain.

With this in mind, let me re-emphasize some of the **key issues** and **recommendations** that participants perceived to be crucial:

Key Issues:

1. First, we have many different cases or examples of reconciliation, but there is no one model that states and/or societies should diligently follow. Rather, reconciliation is case-specific, depending also on the history, nature, and the dynamics of the conflict that preceded it, and the extent to which political and societal relationships have to be reconstructed.
 2. It was noted that reconciliation can provide a co-operative framework for managing conflicts; a framework that makes possible dialogue and resolving difficult issues; a framework that can also serve as a confidence-building measure to build or re-establish trust.
 3. The establishment of regional co-operative frameworks was also seen as important in advancing reconciliation, not only to bring states together, but also societies. The role of the European Union and the Council of Europe were mentioned in that regard. As was that of the OSCE.
 4. Reconciliation should not only be driven by political considerations and state interests, but also by normative motivations. Underlined was the need for the mutual recognition of grievances; but also for seeking truth and justice.
 5. In terms of dealing with the past, facing history together and having a dialogue on historical legacies, myths and long-held misperceptions, were viewed as crucial.
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However, reconciliation also allows for overcoming a tragic past by initiating a new beginning.

6. Reconciliation requires efforts on multiple levels and among multiple actors, including on the political and governmental levels, as well as among civil society. In this context, the important role that women can have in reconciliation processes was elaborated on. Important is also that young people are drawn into reconciliation efforts, primarily through activities that facilitate youth exchanges and other types of mutual contacts. Reconciliation is never a 'one-generation' process; generational change is important to make the process of reconciliation irreversible.
7. Lastly, reconciliation requires political leadership, courage and a vision of how future relationships should be constructed. The use of symbolic gestures, particularly on the part of political leaders, was also viewed as a crucial element in reconciliation processes; as was a commitment to such processes by the broadest possible segment of society.

Key Recommendations:

A number of important **Key recommendations** can also be drawn from today's discussions:

1. Some participants recommended that the OSCE could provide a forum for promoting reconciliation. Reconciliation activities could be discussed not only in the human dimension but also in the 2nd dimension.
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2. In that regard, some of the OSCE executive structures, including field operations and institutions, could continue to be at the forefront of facilitating reconciliation efforts; programmatic activities could even be further enhanced in that regard (e.g. promoting confidence-building measures on societal level, such as among youths; supporting education initiatives).
3. The OSCE could promote more youth interaction, some of which is already taking place within the programmatic activities of our field operations and OSCE institutions. For example, future Chairmanships may consider holding an OSCE-wide artistic or photographic contest for young adults, featuring themes (and experiences) of reconciliation.
4. Lessons learned and best practices could be collected. As we saw from today's discussions of various cases of reconciliation, there is already a rich tradition of practices and many different elements of reconciliation processes could be identified. I would add here that exploring what the OSCE is doing with other international organizations and actors with regard to reconciliation activities would probably also be worthwhile.

Concluding let me thank you again for having been here with us today.
