

# **A German view on the OSCE Corfu Process: an opportunity to strengthen cooperative security in Europe**

Werner Hoyer<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Werner Hoyer is a Member of the German Federal Parliament and Minister of State at the German Federal Foreign Office.

The OSCE Ministerial Council, meeting in Athens in early December last year, decided to continue and further develop the 'Corfu Process', the dialogue on the future of security in Europe initiated in 2009. The Ministers reconfirmed in a political declaration that they remained committed to the joint vision of a free, democratic and more integrated OSCE area, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, free of dividing lines and zones with different levels of security. In the declaration, the Ministers took a sober view and clearly laid out the challenges facing our common European security: the failure to fully implement the principles of the OSCE Final Act and OSCE commitments, the use of force as a means to settle disputes, unresolved regional conflicts, stalemates in conventional arms control and the suspension of the implementation of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty regime. They called for common achievements in the fields of the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms to be fully safeguarded and further advanced. They also pointed to new threats which require common responses.

There are high expectations as far as the OSCE is concerned, and the catalogue of commitments is imposing. It is obvious that answers to the pressing challenges facing the OSCE area can only be found if states act together, not against each other. In the 21st century, security cannot merely be regarded as 'hard security'; a comprehensive security concept remains crucial. Thinking in terms of a zero-sum game will get us nowhere; on the contrary, what is needed is a cooperative approach as the basis for a true security partnership. The security of one party cannot be ensured to the detriment of another. Quite the opposite: it is dependent on the neighbouring party enjoying the highest possible level of security. One could term this the principle of additive security: everyone needs to have an interest in the security of partners and neighbours in order to guarantee their own optimum security. The OSCE success story derives from exactly this approach. The Organization must now grasp the opportunity to reassume its pioneering role in the field of cooperative security.

The OSCE must become proactive in tackling pressing European security issues. With the OSCE Corfu Process an appropriate framework was created for discussing disagreements and concerns openly, honestly and in an unbiased manner, in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding, with a view to making progress in resolving problems. The Corfu Process is one of the most important issues for the Kazakh OSCE Chairmanship, demanding leadership and responsibility. Along with its EU partners, Germany will do its utmost to support Kazakhstan towards this end.

### **Why is there a need for action here?**

- The high expectations of a 'new era of democracy, peace and unity' in Europe linked with the 1990 Charter of Paris have as yet not been met in full. The goal of a lasting order of peace in the OSCE area has not yet been attained. The armed conflict in Georgia in August 2008 was a clear illustration of this. The OSCE should continue to play a role in efforts to resolve this conflict, not only in its current role as the co-chair of the Geneva talks and a participant in the mechanism to prevent and react to incidents. Despite many years of endeavour, not least by the OSCE, the Transnistria conflict and the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh remain unresolved.
- The OSCE must get to grips with new security challenges which do not stop at national borders. These include the threat of terrorism and organized crime, trafficking in drugs and people and migration issues. It must equip itself to deal with new challenges of the 21st century, such as climate change and energy security. The interdependence among OSCE states is obvious; equally obvious, therefore, is the need for joint, cooperative solutions.

- Today, even more than in the 1990s, numerous regional and international actors in the OSCE area are engaged in foreign and security policy. The EU, for instance, with its Common Security and Defence Policy, its Neighbourhood Policy and the Strategy for Central Asia, which Germany initiated during its EU Presidency. Within the framework of the Euro- Atlantic Partnership Council, NATO maintains relations with 22 partners. With the NATO-Russia Council, the NATO-Georgia Commission and the NATO-Ukraine Commission, it can react to the particular demands being made of these partners. A large number of OSCE states belong to the Council of Europe, which promotes and monitors human rights protection and the strengthening of democracy and the rule of law in Europe. The Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) also deals with security issues in the OSCE area. It is in our interest not to consider challenges in isolation from the viewpoint of one specific organization. The Platform for Cooperative Security adopted in 1999 as part of the Charter for European Security must therefore be given real substance and made more use of as a basis for the OSCE's exchanges with other regional and international organizations.
- President Medvedev proposed — firstly during his visit to Berlin in June 2008 — that a legally binding treaty on European security be elaborated as a response to the urgent security issues in Europe. He presented a draft in December 2009. This initiative reflects Russia's keenness to have its voice heard on questions which Russia regards as its vital interests. We should therefore take up the offer of discussion and act on it constructively. All OSCE states must have an interest in a cooperative security architecture, in which Russia is an indispensable partner. In this context, it must be clear that all partners can express their interests and expectations in a dialogue on European security. Germany, like other countries, has said that the Russian proposal should in the first instance be taken up within the scope of the OSCE Corfu Process, because the OSCE comprises all states of importance to security in Europe and is based on a comprehensive approach to security.

We also want to use other fora, such as the NATO-Russia Council and the EU's dialogue with Russia, to support this important debate initiated by Russia, to build confidence and thus to attain concrete results for the benefit of our common security.

### **What are our priorities in the Corfu Process?**

The decision of the Athens Ministerial Council (1/2 December 2009) on the Corfu Process lists a whole range of topics which can be covered in this framework. In order to achieve substantive results, it is important not to get bogged down, but to agree within the OSCE on the most pressing challenges from the start.

In Germany's view, one central issue is strengthening the OSCE's role in early warning, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Conflict prevention and resolution is after all the OSCE's *raison d'être*, its core competence. This may, for example, raise the following issues: OSCE institutions, field missions, which play an important role in early warning, and OSCE mechanisms, should be optimally interlinked. Consideration should be given to whether the already well-stocked toolbox of mechanisms and instruments needs to be supplemented with new instruments. The head of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, Ambassador Salber, has suggested that the respective chairs or the Secretary General of the OSCE be given the possibility of seconding a limited observer mission ad hoc. This and other proposals should be discussed openly.

The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), Ambassador Vollebaek, has rightly pointed out that violations of minority rights and the lack of agreements between majorities and minorities are the main causes of conflicts in the OSCE area and that the protection of members of one's own ethnic group frequently

plays a role in the emergence of conflicts. We should therefore strengthen the HCNM as part of conflict prevention.

Disarmament and arms control must be central to any discussion of European security. We must think how best to further strengthen the existing acquis on arms control and confidence- and security-building measures and how it can be adapted to the newest challenges. With its legally binding limitation, information and verification regime, the CFE Treaty in particular is a vital component of Europe's security architecture and constitutes a milestone in the development of the cooperative security concept. However, in the light of the radical changes in Europe's security policy landscape since 1990, there is now an urgent need to further develop the CFE regime, as well as individual confidence- and security-building measures. The Corfu Process, with a broad range of participants within the OSCE, provides an important opportunity to discuss these subjects in a future-oriented manner going beyond the existing negotiating formats for the CFE Treaty or the 1999 Vienna Document. Here, the focus should be on two questions: what part will conventional arms limitation and control play for European security at the strategic and regional level in the future, and what qualitative and structural adaptations to the existing instruments are needed for this? Such a discussion also needs to consider whether the political linkage of arms control instruments with the resolution of existing regional conflicts has proven valuable.

We need to show still greater resolve in tackling the so-called new challenges and we need to carefully consider how this can best be done. I am thinking, first of all, of cross-border threats such as terrorism, organized crime and trafficking in drugs and people. Here we need to give support and assistance especially to those countries that share a border with unstable neighbours. What is common to all these threats is that they do not stop at national borders. The quest for positive economic development in which all people can participate, with at the same time active measures to protect the environment, is a fundamental principle of cooperation in the OSCE area. In this context, strengthening good governance and a common response to the global challenges of climate change and energy security are key tasks for the OSCE. In facing up to the new challenges and dangers, the OSCE should endeavour to coordinate closely with other regional and international players in order to feed in its specific expertise.

Long-term stability and security can only be assured if human rights and rule-of-law standards are respected and democratic freedom of expression is guaranteed. Upholding the freedom and independence of the media, strengthening the rule of law; these are values to which all OSCE participating states have explicitly committed themselves. The improved implementation of commitments under the OSCE Human Dimension must be an integral part of the European security dialogue. In this context, the institutions — especially the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities — have a key role to play. We should therefore strengthen them in their work.

With regard to ODIHR, it will be crucial that the OSCE states really do implement the existing, comprehensive acquis. The field of human rights is covered by a host of agreements, decisions and declarations. Unfortunately, not all OSCE states adhere to them. Some governments must be made more aware that this aspect is by no means less important than hard security, but is rather its prerequisite.

## What should we bear in mind if we want the Corfu Process to be a success?

- In discussions in the Corfu Process we should concentrate on concrete areas in which European security can be strengthened. Purely theoretical discussions of principle take us nowhere.
- Even thirty-five years ago, the CSCE process was based on the recognition that there needs to be a comprehensive approach to security. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms was a part of the 'Helsinki Decalogue'. This made the OSCE the first body to take a comprehensive view of security which is reflected in national security strategies and in the European security strategy and which NATO has taken on board with its comprehensive approach. Obviously, this approach must be taken with the Corfu Process, too.
- The OSCE's comprehensive acquis — we might mention just the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris, the Charter for European Security — is to a certain degree the basis for the discussion. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. All the same, we should give thought to how we can build on existing commitments and improve their implementation, because there is no lack of principles, just of the political will to put them into practice.
- The politically — not legally — binding character of the OSCE does not constitute a weakness. Quite the opposite. When it comes to sensitive issues affecting a state's internal and external security, a process based on consultation is beneficial. The OSCE offers great flexibility — as the Corfu Process shows — as well as openness for work with third parties, whether cooperation partners, other regional and international organizations or civil society. The participating states should make even greater use of these advantages of the OSCE.
- The Corfu Process is a long-term one, its outcome remains open. The results of the discussions must be secured and implemented. This requires clear structures, on which the last Ministerial Council in Athens was unable to reach an optimal agreement. So we will have to try all the harder to operationalize the results attained.
- The Corfu Process can only be successful if the open and transparent dialogue re-establishes confidence and mobilizes political will. These are the preconditions for an OSCE that is able to help resolve conflicts, existing or new. Conversely, the dialogue under the Corfu Process is not taking place in a vacuum. Actions count for more than words.
- We must use the momentum of the Corfu Process. The framework conditions are good: questions relating to security in Europe are on the agenda elsewhere, too — in the EU-Russia dialogue, in the NATO-Russia Council, or in the disarmament talks between the US and Russia. The progress made in the Corfu Process thus far is encouraging: it has already led to a more open exchange among participating states. As we move ahead, we should take a lead from the CSCE process. The aim of the CSCE process was to replace confrontation with cooperation. It proved possible to combine differing interests for mutual benefit. This smoothed the way for the cooperative security policy for which the OSCE stands to this day.



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Netherlands Helsinki Committee  
Het Nutshuis  
Riviermarkt 4  
2513 AM The Hague  
The Netherlands

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