

# Controversial Proposal for OSCE Summit Meeting

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## 1. Kazakhstan at the helm of the OSCE

Since Kazakhstan has taken over the OSCE chairmanship at the beginning of this year, it has developed a flurry of activities all over the Eurasian region. Kazakhstan's Secretary of State and Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev has already been visiting many OSCE states in the first quarter of 2010 which include the 'regular' states such as those involved in the conflict in and around Nagorno- Karabakh, but also many other states, such as Italy and Belarus.

One of Kazakhstan's aims is also to organize an OSCE Summit meeting this year which would be the first one in eleven years: the last one took place at the end of 1999 in Istanbul, Turkey. The summit initiative has received a mixed reception. Questions are being raised not only about the issue of what the summit should talk about, but also whether the human rights situation in Kazakhstan would not damage the reputation of the OSCE and, in particular, its human dimension. A group of US non-governmental organizations have taken the initiative to ask OSCE states to demand improvements in the human rights situation in Kazakhstan before accepting the idea of an OSCE Summit meeting in the Central-Asian country. Kazakhstan also wants to repeat the 2009 Greek initiative of organizing an informal meeting of all foreign ministers in the middle of 2010. The 2009 meeting resulted in the so-called Corfu process which should rebuild mutual confidence in the OSCE security domain. As a matter of fact, the Russian Federation aims to conclude a new European Security Treaty, although the Western response is rather mixed, as many states do not see the need for a new document and definitely not a document which would neglect the importance of the human dimension.

The priorities for Kazakhstan's 2010 chairmanship are not really surprising: it wants to address terrorism and other threats, to work on a solution to the 'protracted conflicts' in the OSCE area and to promote tolerance. More peculiar is Kazakhstan's decision also to focus on the vaguely worded 'co-operation on transport'. A final priority which is very understandable from Kazakhstan's geographical position is the 'reconstruction of Afghanistan'. An interesting, although not so important proposal is the Kazakh idea to label the 1st of August (the day on which the Helsinki Final Act was signed in 1975) as the 'OSCE Day'.

The human rights situation in Kazakhstan continues to attract international attention. After the country's most famous human rights defender, Eveny Zhovtis, was imprisoned for four years in September last year because of vehicular manslaughter in highly controversial legal proceedings, this spring an opposition leader, Vladimir Kozlov, was jailed for ten days on charges of holding an unsanctioned rally. Kozlov is the leader of the Alga! political party which has already been seeking official registration for five years. The US Ambassador to Kazakhstan had a clear opinion about this 'criminal' case: 'I would call that democracy as a work in progress'.<sup>2</sup> Zhovtis' case will be dealt with by the Supreme Court shortly, whereas Kozlov is also appealing in his case.

## 2. Budget for 2010 approved in time

It was an encouraging development to note that the new chairmanship was not obliged to deal with the adoption of the budget. For the first time in years the OSCE participating states managed to find consensus on the 2010 budget before the start of the budget year. The budget is decreasing step-by-step and amounts to around € 150 million for the year 2010. Last year the annual budget amounted to a little over € 158 million. As usual around two-thirds of the budget is spent on the OSCE's field operations.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav033110.shtml>.

### 3. The OSCE's 'protracted conflicts'

The OSCE's traditional 'frozen' conflicts have seen substantial developments over the past few years. The most well known are, of course, Abkhazia and South Ossetia which, as a result of the short Georgian-Russian war of August 2008, have de facto been occupied by the Russian authorities, although formally Moscow has recognized both regions as 'independent states'. Except for some exotic countries which have 'special' relations with the Russian Federation (Nicaragua and Venezuela) this 'independence' has not been recognized by any other states, not even from Moscow's own zone of special interest.

The conflict in and around Nagorno-Karabakh has become the subject of heated debates since the Turkish government has opened the door to normalizing relations with its arch-enemy Armenia, resulting in a formal agreement to open the borders between both countries. This has seriously upset Turkey's traditional ally Azerbaijan which feared that it would be left behind with an unsolved Nagorno-Karabakh problem, including the fact that a major part of traditional Azeri territory is occupied by Armenian forces. Turkey backtracked and now links a normalization of its relations with Armenia with progress in the conflict with Azerbaijan.

No major changes can be observed in the other 'frozen conflict' of Transdniestria which, officially, is part of Moldovan territory. Due to the political turmoil in Moldova in the past period, its negotiating position, in particular in its relations with the Russian Federation, has been seriously weakened and it seems that Moscow is exploiting the opportunity to firm up its position. During a high-level visit by a Russian delegation to Moldova in January, it became clear that Moscow wants to support the Moldovan wish to reintegrate Transdniestria only, if Moldova would guarantee to remain a 'neutral' state which would exclude it from 'going westwards'. It also became clearer than ever before that Moscow is not even contemplating withdrawing its 'peacekeeping' troops from Transdniestria, before a settlement of the conflict has been achieved and probably not even after that, as it aims to stay in the region as a 'guarantor' of any political deal concerning the controversial territory. The Moldovan authorities continued to demand the immediate withdrawal of the Russian troops which they also consider as a violation of their neutrality, but it is highly unlikely that Moscow will even consider these demands seriously.



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Security and Human Rights (formerly Helsinki Monitor) is a journal devoted to issues inspired by the work and principles of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It looks at the challenge of building security through cooperation across the northern hemisphere, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, as well as how this experience can be applied to other parts of the world. It aims to stimulate thinking on the question of protecting and promoting human rights in a world faced with serious threats to security.

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