

Are the reforms of the OSCE needed - if so, which reforms? What's your position towards Russian proposals? According to some information "western countries" rejected Russian proposals at the High Level Consultations? How do you comment?

No organization should continue unchanged when the environment in which it's being asked to operate is itself changing. So reforms at the OSCE are clearly needed given the new security situation that has been developing recently. You can see this process reflected, too, at the United Nations, the European Union and many other bodies. As far as Slovenia's Chairmanship goes, the whole question of reform has occupied us for the best part of the year and I cannot summarize the process in a few words. But we are now at an exciting stage where the Panel which I appointed, which included a member from the RF, was able to produce a report that was unanimous on all but one of its reform proposals.

These proposals were examined by participating States at the High Level Consultations, which were not called to reject or accept anything but to establish a mechanism – a working group process – that will hopefully culminate in several decisions being put to the Ministerial Council. These are likely to focus on the internal structure of the OSCE, tightening up its rules and procedures and strengthening the role of the Secretary General, among other things. I am confident that the decisions will further improve the effectiveness of the OSCE, make it better able to face the challenges of the changed environment and allow participating States to feel even more strongly that this is their Organization. Whether this will be the end of the reform process I very much doubt, as the OSCE has a reputation for being flexible and its ability to regenerate itself has been proven once already.

Moscow has repeatedly said that the OSCE is moving away from the principles on which it was founded - pointing out geographic and functional imbalance. Do you think there is a need for OSCE Charter/Statute which would more precisely lay down organisation's activities?

The two parts of this question are not really linked. First, let me stress that I believe relations with Moscow remain warm and friendly and certainly FM Lavrov assures me of the RF's full support for the OSCE in our personal encounters. Most of the participating States, agree with the need to develop either an OSCE Charter or Statute which gives the OSCE a legal personality and turns it, at last, into a true Organization with all the advantages in terms of a more effective operation that accrue from that. However this is still a matter of discussions and, as always, subject of a consensual decision by all of the OSCE States.

That does not mean that I accept that the OSCE is moving away from the principles on which it was founded, nor that any geographic or functional imbalance would, or even should, be corrected by a Charter. While our basic principles could perhaps benefit from being re-stated, as a help in regenerating the Organization, there has been no divergence from those principles in my year of Chairmanship.

Moreover where imbalances, of whatever nature, do exist in our activities, we must first look at the reasons and examine whether they are perhaps justified. It would for example, be pointless for the OSCE to attempt to facilitate business start-ups for female entrepreneurs in Germany, acting in

our so-called second dimension, whereas it is helpful to do so in Tajikistan. Is that an imbalance or just a commonsense application of scarce resources to where a need is greater?

What are your expectations from the Ministerial council in Ljubljana? Is adoption of concrete decisions about the OSCE reform realistic?

I am confident that the Slovenian Chairmanship will end its year of office with a well-attended and useful meeting of Foreign Ministers in Ljubljana in December. We have much to discuss, but while I am certain that the processes of OSCE reform and of resolving frozen conflicts will be still be occupying the next Chairmanship, there is no reason to suppose that we shall not take meaningful and concrete decisions that move all these issues forward.

What are the perspectives for strengthening the anti-terrorist and anti-crime segment of the OSCE. Can we expect an agreement and political commitment of the OSCE states to uphold the principle for "extradition or prosecute" suspects of the terrorist activities - this is a longstanding appeal from the Russian side?

Ever since the Bucharest Ministerial Council in 2001 the fight against terrorism has been one of the main priorities in the work of the OSCE. The participating States have adopted a number of important political documents, as well as some significant commitments in concrete practical areas like travel document security, container security, the protection of civil aviation from shoulder-fired rockets and suicide terrorism. This has been accompanied by a significant increase in OSCE resources dedicated to the fight against terrorism. Not only do we have an Action Against Terrorism Unit in the Secretariat but all OSCE structures, including the field operations, have a role and are engaged in the Organization's counter-terrorism work. This engagement will be further increased, as it is clear terrorism remains a serious threat to the lives and security of all.

On your second point, the universal application of the principle "extradite or prosecute", as stipulated in UN Security Council Resolution 1566, is an extremely important tool in the fight against terrorism, as it ensures that there are no safe-havens for terrorists to hide. Recognizing this and wishing to support the work of the UN in this area, the OSCE organized earlier this year a major international conference on enhancing legal co-operation in criminal matters related to terrorism. It examined the whole spectrum of bilateral and international co-operation in investigating terrorist crimes and bringing terrorists to justice, highlighting existing problems, but also some very positive examples, including in the CIS area, such as between the Russian Federation and Georgia or between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

A possible decision at Ljubljana, with concrete commitments in this area, is being prepared. In the meantime, the OSCE is collaborating with the UNODC and the CoE in conducting training for judicial officials, judges and prosecutors, involved in extradition and international legal assistance issues.

Moscow has criticized the Organisation for its double standards in election monitoring. What are the criteria of the OSCE regarding election observation? Do you share the opinion that observation mission's membership should be broadened with representatives coming from other States, and the assessment of the election itself could be made only after consultations within the organization? What to do to avoid conflicts regarding OSCE observers?

Election observation, not just of actual voting but of the entire process leading up to it, is widely acknowledged as one of the OSCE's major strengths. So it is not always easy to see why such criticisms are leveled. Certainly there is no evidence to support this. The same open standards and

criteria are scrupulously applied throughout the Organization's work. Observation missions have been open to all States but not all actually do offer to send members. There is even funding available to broaden the geographical base of the membership of each team.

However, changing the way an assessment is made from the current open, contemporary and objective system to one where consultations might conceivably contaminate the assessment before it can be published is simply not on the agenda.

Is OSCE planning to observe parliamentary election to Chechnya on 27 November?

No and for reasons that have already been aired before, focusing on security and freedom of access to polling stations throughout the country. I think the latest attack in the northern Caucasus on Thursday, for which I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sympathy to the RF and especially to the victims, serves to underline our reasons.

Moscow has for a long time warned international organizations, including OSCE, of the poor conditions of the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia and Estonia. What OSCE proposes to drastically change the situation?

We do listen to both sides on this question when it is raised in the Permanent Council, which is not infrequently. Clearly there are two differing points of view here and the OSCE has a role to play in reconciling these. While the fact that we no longer have a mission in the Baltic States ended our involvement on a day-to-day basis, nevertheless both the OSCE High Commissioner on Human Rights and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights are able to assess the situation and issue reports on the basis of which we can make recommendations where necessary.

According to some reports Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan intend to bring the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh at the Ministerial Council. What are your expectations? Do you see any progress in resolving the conflict?

The issue of Nagorno-Karabakh is certain to be raised at the next Ministerial Council, as it has been at all the Ministerials I have attended. However, I believe there is cautious reason to believe that this time the tone of the comments and the atmosphere in which discussions are held will be markedly improved. The Slovenian Chairmanship has devoted considerable time and effort to trying to bring both sides closer to a recognition of the steps that need to be taken to avert any risk of further conflict. Talks under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group have taken place several times this year and, while it would be foolish to declare that a solution is at last in sight, I think that measurable progress has been made and we will, perhaps, be able to highlight this in Ljubljana.

Do you agree that scales of contribution should be changed - and make it more like the UN scale?

Although the discussions on this issue have continued for most of this year I am unable to say what the final outcome will be. The issues are complicated and it would prejudice any further discussion and possible solution if I were to offer a personal opinion here and now but I remain optimistic that with goodwill and compromise we shall see a solution that sufficiently satisfies all views. It would be truly a tragedy for the work of the OSCE to be suspended next year for want of a relatively small amount of money. The entire OSCE budget is not even 180 million euros, much less than the cost of the conflicts it prevents, without reckoning in the peace dividend which it generates.

What is OSCE's attitude towards the possible widening of the negotiations format for the settlement of the Transdniestrian issue with EU and the U.S. as observers? How do you see perspectives for settlement of the TD issue?

The OSCE Mission's mandate in Moldova is to facilitate negotiations for a political settlement of the Transdniestria issue. The OSCE and the Slovenian Chairmanship are prepared to support and participate in any format that is acceptable to the sides involved.

The OSCE remains committed to finding a peaceful political settlement to the Transdniestrian question that fully respects the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the Moldova, while providing a special status for Moldova's Transdniestrian region

I believe that fresh impetus should be given to the process of finding a lasting solution. The Slovenian Chairmanship has so far devoted considerable amount of time and effort to this end. Today's visit to Moscow and to Moldova and Ukraine, which are to follow, as well as the meeting of mediators - with EU and US as observers – this week in Ljubljana are steps in this direction. We hope that the negotiation process, scheduled to resume at the end of this month in the expanded "5+2" format, will be another such positive step.

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