
Chairmanship: Ukraine**REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE
CONTACT GROUP WITH THE OSCE MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS
FOR CO-OPERATION TO THE TWENTIETH MEETING OF THE
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

The 2013 Swiss Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group (MCG) worked together with Mediterranean Partners to foster an open and interactive dialogue within the Group and on following a demand-driven approach to responding to the interests and priorities of the Mediterranean Partners. Important steps have been taken by the Chair to strengthen the results-oriented co-operation between the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners.

During the course of the year, six meetings of the Mediterranean Contact Group were held, as well as a joint meeting with the Asian Partners for Co-operation. Each meeting focused on a topic proposed by one of the Mediterranean Partners. The Swiss Chair encouraged and supported contributions from the Partners' capitals. At each meeting the relevant experts from the OSCE structures were also present in order to foster a genuine dialogue.

The first meeting of the MCG, held on 1 March, focused on the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination by strengthening interfaith dialogue with a presentation by Father Nabil Haddad, Director of Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Centre, Amman, briefing about the Jordanian experience. Ms. Floriane Hohenberg, Head of the Department on Tolerance and Discrimination, ODIHR, also contributed to the meeting with a presentation of ODIHR's activities in this area. Furthermore, the meeting provided the opportunity for the launch of the Arabic Translation of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, sponsored by Germany and Switzerland.

"Dialogue and mediation in a regional context" was the topic chosen for the second meeting of the MCG, held on 19 April, featuring presentations by Mr. Azzedine Farhane, Director for Multilateral Affairs, Foreign Affairs Ministry, Morocco; Mr. Juan Jose Escobar, Ambassador-at-large for Mediterranean Affairs, Spain; and Dr. Claus Neukirch, Deputy Director, CPC, Head of Operations Service, OSCE. The Moroccan-Spanish initiative on the Group of Friends on Mediation as well as OSCE activities in the field of Mediation were presented and discussed. The OSCE was subsequently invited to the second meeting within the framework of this initiative in Rabat on 8 July 2013.

The third meeting, on 17 May, focused on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings with presentations by Ms. Merav Shmueli, Senior Assistant to the Anti-Trafficking National Co-ordinator, Minister of Justice, Israel, giving a general overview of the progress and remaining challenges faced by Israel, and by Dr. Maria Giammarinaro, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, proposing further actions and initiatives to enhance co-operation between participating States and the Mediterranean Partners in this area.

At its fourth meeting on 21 June, the MCG focused on “Good governance, the fight against corruption, and stolen assets recovery”. Mr. Mohamed Askri, Attorney-General, Senior Advisor to the Minister of Justice, Tunisia, discussed his country’s experiences in fighting corruption and recovering stolen assets since the fall of the Ben Ali regime. Ms. Nina Lindroos-Kopolo, Head of the Economic Governance Unit at the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities presented on the OSCE’s efforts in assisting participating States in their fight against corruption, increasing transparency and addressing insufficiencies in the international legal framework. The Chair underlined that this question will again be taken up during the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship in 2014.

The fifth meeting, held on 13 October, discussed “Current challenges in the fight against terrorism, particularly kidnapping for ransom,” with presentations by: Mr. Abdenour Hibouche, President, *Cellule de Traitement du Renseignement Financier*, Algeria; and, for the OSCE, Mr. Reinhard Uhrig, Deputy Head, and Mr. Manuel Marion, Senior Programme Officer, Action against Terrorism Unit, Transnational Threats Department (TNTD/ATU). The Chairperson stressed the potential of the OSCE as a clearinghouse for best practices on this issue.

The last meeting of the year took place on 15 November and provided an opportunity for the 2013 OSCE Ukrainian Chairmanship to brief participants on the preparations for the upcoming Ministerial Council meeting, as well as to discuss the outcome of the 2013 OSCE Mediterranean Conference. The main topic on the agenda was a presentation by Libyan Ambassador Mr. Ibrahim Ali Albesbas, on the subject of Libya’s application to become an OSCE Partner for Co-operation. In conclusion, the participants welcomed the incoming Serbian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group.

The annual joint meeting of the Mediterranean and Asian Contact Groups was held on 19 July and focused on the “Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security” with interventions by four speakers: Mr. Detlef Hempel, FSC Co-ordinator and Military Advisor, German Delegation; Dr. Haykel Ben Mahfoudh, Senior Advisor, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF); Colonel John Spierin, Director of Legal Services, Irish Defence Forces; and Ambassador Ayoob M. Erfani, Afghanistan. This meeting provided the opportunity for an update on recent developments and the progress achieved in making the OSCE Partnership more interactive and action-oriented, as well as an update about developments within the Helsinki Process. A representative from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly also informed about the conclusions of their annual session relevant to the Joint Contact Group.

Consistent efforts were made by the Swiss Chair of the Mediterranean Contact Group, directed at successful preparation of the annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference, which was held in Monaco on 28 and 29 October 2013. The Conference focused on enhancing the role

of women in public, political and economic life, as requested by the Mediterranean Partners. Discussions at the conference highlighted the importance of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership and pointed to exchanges of best practices as a good way to further interaction between the OSCE and its Partners. Improving women's participation in the public, political and economic life needed to remain a priority, despite the progress already achieved in some cases. Pursuing closer co-operation in the field of fostering women's participation in peace mediation and facilitation processes was discussed in this context. Co-operation among international organizations, the involvement of civil society and of the business sector were also key to further progress.

In the second session, on the topic of combating human trafficking, it was proposed to focus on the role of the business sector, recruitment methods and the role of civil society. The third session, devoted to combating the financing of terrorism, particularly the payment of ransoms, highlighted outstanding challenges, such as ensuring the survival of hostages, the adoption of non-ransom policies and the public understanding of such approach. Possible areas of work were also mentioned ranging from preventing trips in risky regions to intra-State co-operation and assistance.

During the discussions, both the Partners and the participating States stressed their interest in pursuing the exchange of information on the topics of the Conference on a more concrete, practical level, through expert meetings and by pursuing an interactive dialogue in the Mediterranean Contact Group. An effective connection between the discussions which took place at the Conference and the activities in 2014 as follow-up should be pursued. To this effect, a Chair's perception paper was discussed at the MCG meeting of 15 November 2013. In its capacity as holder of the OSCE Chairmanship in 2014, Switzerland will continue to promote action-oriented activities, also in relation to the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

The 2013 Swiss Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group expresses its sincere gratitude to all the participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation for their commitment and co-operation in the framework of the OSCE Partnership as a platform for open dialogue and exchange of views, as well as in promotion of a results-oriented and demand-driven co-operation. The partners will be associated to the discussions of the Helsinki+40 process.