



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Secretary General Lamberto Zannier

Address at the conference on “Mediation in the OSCE area”

(Delivered by Dr. Claus Neukirch, Deputy Director of the OSCE Conflict

Prevention Centre for Operations Service)

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Your Excellency Minister Corlăţean,

Mr. Chairperson Borbély,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me say at the outset how pleased I am to be here. Or perhaps I should say: it is good to be back. I was in Bucharest last September for the 150th Anniversary of Romanian Diplomacy. During my visit, Minister Corlăţean and I explored possibilities for deepening the co-operation between Romania and the OSCE. This event presents a concrete opportunity to do exactly that. I am very grateful to Romania for taking the initiative and hosting today’s conference.

With mediation, you have chosen a timely topic. Mediation is something I can personally relate to. As the former UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo as well as the former Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, and of course in my current role as OSCE Secretary General, I

have been involved in mediation on multiple occasions. In my experience, mediation is most effective when mediators fully understand the complexities of a particular conflict, and when they respect the need for impartiality and confidentiality. My experience also taught me that mediation is particularly relevant as a preventive tool. I have intervened in various situations when the level of tensions was still low and where constructive dialogue was still possible.

Mediation is of course also relevant for the OSCE as an organization. I would even say that mediation is part of the DNA of the OSCE. The peaceful settlement of disputes was included as one of ten guiding principles in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. Subsequently, the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe served as one of the main platforms for dialogue between the East and the West. When the CSCE evolved into the OSCE, mediation and conflict resolution continued to be core topics. It was the 1992 Helsinki Document in particular that laid the foundation for the Organization's work on conflict cycle issues in the years to come.

Today, the OSCE's mediation role in the protracted conflicts is well known. To give you a brief overview, the OSCE is a co-mediator in the 5+2 talks on the Transdniestrian Settlement Process. With regard to Georgia, the OSCE acts as co-chair of the Geneva International Discussions, and it co-facilitates the meetings of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism dealing with the situation along the administrative boundary line. The OSCE also deals with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through the Minsk Group and through the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office.

The OSCE also uses mediation when it responds to emerging crises. One example is the 2010 crisis in Kyrgyzstan. The joint efforts of the then Kazakh Chairmanship and the OSCE executive structures were crucial to containing the tensions that flared up following the events in April 2010. These efforts paved the way for the subsequent deployment of OSCE police advisers, tasked to improve relations between the Kyrgyz police and local communities.

Less well known, but equally important, is the OSCE's work in facilitating dialogue at the local and national level. These efforts are critical to reducing tensions between groups and to fostering cohesion within a society emerging from conflict.

OSCE field operations play an important role in dialogue facilitation. For example, the OSCE Mission to Skopje has continuously promoted inter-ethnic community dialogue in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In the run-up to this year's local elections, the Mission organized a series of roundtables in municipalities that had previously experienced election-related conflict. The roundtables involved political parties and mayoral candidates, who discussed pending issues and committed to respecting each other's right to campaign freely. Another example is the OSCE Office in Tajikistan. The Office regularly convenes so-called Social Partnership Clubs, where government, political parties, and civil society actors come together to discuss a wide range of issues.

On dialogue facilitation, I also want to draw your attention to the work of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. His efforts have often made it possible to resolve tensions at an early stage.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you can see, the OSCE is very active in mediation and dialogue facilitation. Why does the OSCE consider mediation an important tool? How does mediation contribute to security in the OSCE area?

One reason is that mediation is a highly effective instrument of conflict resolution. Statistics show that mediation leads to a five times greater probability of reaching an agreement compared to non-mediated negotiation. Mediation also leads to a significantly greater probability of longer-term tension reduction.¹ According to researchers from the Canada-based Human Security Report Project, the increasing use of mediation is one of the reasons why there are fewer wars today and why wars tend to be less violent than during the Cold War period. In other words, mediation works.

Another reason is the cost-effectiveness of mediation. If conflicts can be contained and prevented through mediation, the costs later on – both human and financial – will be vastly smaller. And vice versa, if existing conflicts can be resolved through mediation, there is enormous potential for the future. One only has to think about the massive benefits that the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict would yield for Armenia and Azerbaijan and for the region as a whole. Likewise, as you are well aware in Romania, the settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict would have many positive ripple effects.

¹ Beardsley, Kyle C./Quinn, David M./Biswas, Bidisha/Wilkenfeld, Jonathan. Mediation Style and Crisis Outcomes. In: Journal of Conflict Resolution, 50(2006), No. 1, pp. 58-86.

Also important is the fact that mediation can be used at different stages of the conflict cycle. Mediators help prevent conflicts before they escalate. In the event of a crisis, mediation can help to contain tensions. Mediation also contributes to resolving long-standing conflicts. Dialogue is an equally important tool during the post-conflict rehabilitation phase, fostering social cohesion.

As I said in the beginning, I consider the use of mediation as a preventive tool particularly important. The OSCE field operations have recognized this. For example, the OSCE Centre in Bishkek has initiated the creation of a network of local mediators in Kyrgyzstan. They help to resolve small-scale disputes at the local level, which also has an early-warning effect. Ambassador Kapinos will certainly elaborate on this project in his presentation tomorrow.

Mediation can also be used at different levels. It helps foster compromise between official decision-makers. At the same time, it promotes people-to-people contacts across conflict lines, for example between members of parliament or between civil society groups. I see a big potential in this. People-to-people contacts can generate popular support for official talks and help address concrete challenges confronting people in societies engaged in conflict. In this regard, the involvement of women's groups is particularly promising, and I welcome the work of the OSCE Gender Section in this area. You will hear more about this from Ambassador Beham tomorrow.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mediation is an important tool for the OSCE's work across the conflict cycle. In this regard, I have been very much encouraged by the broad support from

participating States. This support came to the fore in December 2011 with the adoption of Ministerial Council Decision no. 3/11 on Elements of the Conflict Cycle. The Decision is significant because participating States committed to redoubling their own efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts. They further decided to strengthen the OSCE's capabilities in early warning, early action, mediation and dialogue facilitation, and post-conflict rehabilitation.

On mediation, participating States tasked me to develop a systematic mediation-support capacity within the Conflict Prevention Centre. The Ministerial Council Decision mentions four areas of mediation support:

- Training and capacity-building;
- Knowledge management and operational guidance;
- Outreach, networking, co-operation and co-ordination with local and national actors as well as with international and regional organizations; and
- Operational support to the Chairmanship, heads of field operations and other OSCE mediators.

Today, I am happy to report on the Secretariat's progress in developing a systematic mediation-support capacity. We recently finalized a framework document, which spells out the details of our lines of activity in mediation support. On this basis, the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre has expanded its work on mediation support in recent months. Allow me to give you a few examples.

- In May, a high-level mediation coaching was held for the heads of the OSCE Mission to Skopje, the Mission to Serbia, and the Mission in Kosovo. The coaching provided an opportunity to discuss the regional implications of the recently concluded Belgrade-Pristina agreement.

- Several mediation trainings were conducted in OSCE field operations, for example for police advisors of the Community Security Initiative in southern Kyrgyzstan.
- A systematic mediation debriefing procedure was introduced for OSCE mediators. This makes it possible to capture recommendations and lessons learned from outgoing officials – something that is particularly important given the OSCE’s annually rotating Chairmanship.
- Regular exchanges were held with the UN Mediation Support Unit and with the European External Action Service’s mediation-support capacity. The OSCE also participated in meetings organized by the Group of Friends of Mediation led by Turkey and Finland. These exchanges are important to ensure co-operation. They also allow us to learn from others as we develop our own mediation-support services.

Given the demand for further support from field operations and the Chairmanship, a number of follow-on activities are planned in the coming months. In October, the Conflict Prevention Centre will organize a mediation training course in co-operation with the incoming Swiss Chairmanship. Also, a workshop on mediation and confidence-building measures is planned for Moldova-based representatives of the 3+2 co-mediators and observers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, let me highlight three points about the way forward on mediation in the OSCE area.

First, I am convinced that mediation will continue to be indispensable in the OSCE toolbox. The established formats are of course very important. We will continue to do our utmost to contribute to the resolution of the protracted conflicts in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Peace would yield enormous benefits for the affected societies, not least in the economic sphere. To support official talks, I believe that the potential of people-to-people dialogue at the grassroots level should be further harnessed.

Second, I would like to again highlight the importance of using mediation to address problems before they escalate into full-blown conflicts. The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and OSCE field operations are already doing excellent work in this area. I encourage them to further explore opportunities to build local capacities in dialogue and mediation.

Third, the work of OSCE mediators should be further strengthened. The progress achieved since last year is encouraging. However, in realizing the vision of the Vilnius Ministerial Council, I am convinced that our mediation-support capacity needs to be expanded. The objective is for the Secretariat to provide direct operational support to high-level OSCE mediators. It should also be able to deploy mediation experts at short notice in the event of a crisis. I encourage participating States to consider providing additional resources for these endeavors.

With these concluding words, I would like to reiterate my gratitude to Romania for inviting me today and for hosting this timely conference. I look forward to a fruitful discussion.

Thank you.