



OSCE Security Days

Revitalizing Trust and Co-operation in Europe:
Lessons of the Paris Charter

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Overview

Today, as we approach the 30th anniversary of the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe, ideas, ambitions and aspirations captured in the document remain an inspirational vision for a secure and prosperous wider European area of shared values and interests. Yet 30 years on, the OSCE has much work ahead to overcome the prevailing sense of distrust and disunity which hamper achieving ideals outlined in the Charter, as well as efficient use of the Organization's potential, tools and instruments. Reflections on the processes that produced the Paris Charter and continued shaping security and cooperation in Europe afterwards, lessons learned since the Charter has been adopted, various perspectives on this document's historical context and today's relevance may assist participating States and other relevant actors in finding common solutions to modern common problems. These discussions will contribute to enhancing the OSCE role as a platform for inclusive dialogue, promoting comprehensive security based on co-operation and addressing challenges related to the conflict cycle as well as countering other transnational and cross-cutting threats.

Rationale

At their first summit since Helsinki-1975, in November 1990 the Heads of State of the CSCE participating States adopted the Paris Charter, aimed at defining the CSCE identity in a new international environment that emerged with the end of the Cold War and seizing new opportunities for cooperation. The Paris Charter announced that "the era of confrontation and division of Europe has ended" and envisioned "a new era of democracy, peace and unity" based on democratic governance, the rule of law, and human rights, and relations among participating States founded on

respect and co-operation. All participating States agreed that this was to be the bedrock on which they would seek to construct the new Europe.

The Paris Charter stated that Europe was “liberating itself from the legacy of the past” and reflected “the time of profound change and historic expectations” in Europe. The Charter served as a transition from the CSCE’s role exclusively as a negotiation and multilateral dialogue process to an arrangement, which includes active operational structures to meet post-Cold War challenges. It thus started the institutionalization of the Helsinki Process. Resolved to give their co-operation a new impetus, the participating States decided that common efforts to consolidate democracy, to strengthen peace and to promote unity in Europe required a new quality of political dialogue, and established a permanent administrative infrastructure, which included a Secretariat, initially based in Prague, a Conflict Prevention Centre and an Office for Free Elections.

In the Paris Charter, participating States solemnly pledged their “full commitment to the Ten Principles of the Helsinki Final Act” and undertook or reaffirmed specific commitments across all three dimensions of security. These included the commitment “to build, consolidate and strengthen democracy as the only system of government of our nations”, to “promote economic activity which respects and upholds human dignity,” to “intensify our endeavors to protect and improve our environment,” and “to settle disputes by peaceful means.” Participating States proclaimed again that “security is indivisible, and the security of every participating State is inseparably linked to that of all the others”.

They also expressed their “determination to combat all forms of racial and ethnic hatred, antisemitism, xenophobia and discrimination against anyone as well as persecution on religious and ideological grounds.”

Objectives and expected outcomes

The OSCE Security Day will reflect on the political and diplomatic history of Europe’s reorganization in the late 1980s – early 1990s, and discuss how diplomats from the East and West were able to engage in dialogue that resulted in the Paris Summit of November 1990. Historians and eyewitnesses to the creation of the Paris Charter will discuss the highlights and turning points of the negotiations at the time, which became the embodiment of multilateral diplomacy *par excellence* and led to the unprecedented convergence between East and West in the run-up to the Summit. Due attention may also be given to the roles that smaller states including neutral and non-aligned states as well as civil society, parliamentarians and academic experts played at the end of the Cold War and may play in current circumstances to promote cooperative security.

During the OSCE Security Day, participants will have an opportunity to reflect on progress made over the past three decades in implementing and deepening the broad commitments in the Paris Charter as well as continuing challenges, taking into account the 2020 Albanian Chairmanship’s priority of “implementing our commitments together.” This could include reflection on steps forward as well as gaps in such areas as building inclusive democratic and tolerant societies with full equality for women and men, enhancing economic openness and co-operation, and strengthening friendly relations, sense of unity and improved security among participating States.

Participants may also look at the relevance of historical lessons to addressing today's situation within the OSCE. and how to use them as an inspiration to promote co-operative security in the future and move closer to the realization of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community as envisioned most recently in the Astana Commemorative Declaration (2010). Participants will be encouraged to engage in a debate on how to overcome the current distrust and mutual suspicions and to return to real cooperative security in Europe.

To that end, discussion will include presentation of the Co-operative Security Initiative led by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and GLOBSEC, input from the OSCE Perspectives 20-30 initiative on engaging youth for a safer future, and considerations of current and incoming OSCE Chairs.

The Security Day will focus on the following main objectives:

- 1) Understand the historical context, learn from the negotiations and clear articulation of the Paris Charter to seek ways out of the current stalemate and on to a common vision.
- 2) Identify future perspectives and recommendations on how to increase mutual understanding about different historical interpretations, without focusing only on the historically contested parts, and engage in forward-looking dialogue that may help to recreate trust.
- 3) Consider how the legacy of the Paris Charter is embodied in the institutional framework of the OSCE, focusing on achievements of OSCE structures established through the adoption of the Paris Charter as well as constraints that they face and ways they have evolved to meet new challenges.
- 4) Reflect on the ideas developed by the Cooperative Security Initiative in order to shift momentum in favour of cooperative security and multilateralism in the OSCE area.
- 5) Use the real potential of youth to shape new narratives, drive positive change, and engage actively in peace-building and conflict transformation processes since young people have no memory of the Cold War conflict and no fixed worldview on the tensions from the post-Cold War period.

Indicative Agenda and Guiding Questions

Session 1: (Title tbc) The Paris Charter as an inspiration: Highlights and turning points of the negotiations which lead to the unprecedented convergence between East and West

- What were the highlights and turning points of the negotiations? Which were the windows of opportunities that created the unprecedented convergence between East and West, and what happened to it?
- What lessons for the current European security discussions could be drawn from good practices in the statecraft and multilateral diplomatic dialogue that produced the Paris Charter in 1990?
- How can we enhance mutual understanding about different historical interpretations in the future?
- How did the OSCE evolve since then and what are the achievements?
- What have been the strengths and weaknesses of the OSCE institutional framework that the participating States began to erect through decisions embodied in the Paris Charter?

- What positive role have OSCE structures played in helping participating States to implement their commitments and build co-operative security, and what factors have limited the work of these structures in carrying out their mandates?

Session 2: The future of comprehensive and co-operative security in the OSCE area, three decades after the Paris Charter

- In which areas have participating States most successfully implemented the commitments they undertook in the Paris Charter across all three dimensions of security?
- What have been the most serious challenges and obstacles to implementation of commitments, including those that may not have been foreseen in 1990?
- How is it possible to make sure that the current situation does not permanently endure, and that we return to real cooperative security in Europe in the future?
- What questions raised and findings by security policy experts will help to chart the way forward?

Session 3: Lessons learned, best practices and future perspectives

- The final session will reflect on future perspectives and recommendations on how to increase mutual trust and engage on dialogues that are forward-oriented.