

## International security in the 21st century: credible responses to real threats

An interview with Lamberto Zannier,  
Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Ambassador Lambert Zannier** is an Italian diplomat with long-standing experience in international affairs. Before taking up the post as OSCE Secretary General in July 2011, he led the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (since 2008). From 2000 to 2002, he represented Italy at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague. From 2002 to 2006, he was the Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre.



Photo: European Parliament

Next week, the OSCE will host several conferences on Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security. Can you tell us something more about these events?

**Lamberto Zannier:**

For a number of years now – since 2002 – the OSCE has been holding an annual meeting of political and military experts to review the security situation across its region. This “Annual Security Review Conference”, which will take place from 26 to 28 June in Vienna, focuses on what we call the politico-military dimension of security: from arms control to confidence- and security-building measures to the new threats of the 21st century.

This year, we have introduced an event that will precede the Conference and is meant to look at security from a somewhat different angle. These “Security Days” – on 24 and 25 June – will include speakers from varied backgrounds: think tanks, universities, research institutes and civil society organizations. We hope that they will allow us to tap into their knowledge and expertise, generating fresh discussions and new ideas. In brief: to become yet another source of inspiration for the OSCE.

What will be discussed at the Security Days?

There are two key agenda points that we want to explore in more detail. One is the concept of a security community. This is a concept that is widely discussed in international fora; in fact, the OSCE participating States committed themselves to the vision of a “free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community” at the Astana Summit meeting two years ago. To make this vision come true needs continuous work, reflection, and adaptation to new realities. The Security Days are meant to provide additional input into the strategic orientation

of the OSCE; how can the Organization most effectively and efficiently move toward this vision?

The second important point on the agenda concerns the notion of reconciliation – among people, communities and states. This sounds like a very new area for the OSCE, but it is actually quite familiar territory for us. Many of our field operations have for a long time been engaged in projects that ultimately translate into reconciliation efforts. We just never labelled them as such. At the Days, we will discuss how the OSCE can streamline its work in this area and perhaps develop a more co-ordinated approach to it.

You mention, “adapting to new realities” – what particular security challenges are we facing today?

We all know that 9/11 has had a profound impact on our approach to security. The security challenges of the 21st century have dramatically evolved in nature, and we are still in the middle of this transition. The world has seen an alarming rise in what we call “transnational threats” – those that emanate less from confrontations between states, but from terrorism, organized crime, smuggling of arms and drugs, trafficking in human beings, cyber-crime... you name it. They might not make the same headlines as the Afghanistan conflict or current events in Syria – but they are real threats all the same, and we need to find credible responses to them. It is absolutely essential that security organizations such as the OSCE adapt to such challenges, or even better – stay one step ahead of them.

Because of its broad approach to security, encompassing human rights as well as economic and environmental challenges, the OSCE is very well placed for this. We have just concluded

one step in the adaptation process, by creating a department in the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna that concentrates on the entire spectrum of transnational threats and brings together experts working on border issues, police matters and anti-terrorism measures. And there is more: our portfolio includes dealing with small arms, light weapons and conventional ammunition; supporting freedom of religion; combating racism and discrimination; helping improve energy security; promoting good governance and gender equality... the list goes on.

Since 9/11, security concerns have moved away from Europe to the Middle East and Central Asia. Should the OSCE not enlarge its region and create a much wider security community?

I would not necessarily argue that concerns have entirely moved away from Europe, but, yes, we also say that the security situation in the OSCE area is inextricably linked to that of its neighbours. This includes Afghanistan and the countries in the southern Mediterranean. We are already connected to many of these countries through partnership agreements, and the OSCE participating States have recognized that there is a need for the Organization to get involved, to some extent, in the developments in those regions. We have offered our expertise in democratic transition, in particular when it comes to election assistance, police reform, border management, or the development of democratic institutions. To give you an example, in July 2011 one of our institutions – the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights – held a training course for Egyptian civil society organizations on election and human rights monitoring.

**The security situation in the OSCE area is inextricably linked to that of its neighbours**

Afghanistan is yet another challenge. The OSCE region shares some 2,000 km of border with Afghanistan, so it is easy to understand that the security situation in this country impacts on those in the immediate Central Asian neighbourhood. This is why we have been working with Afghanistan for quite some time. From 2004 to 2010, we assisted in the preparation of the Afghan elections. We train Afghan customs, border and police officers at our Border Management Staff College in Tajikistan. The years ahead will bring changes, but the impending withdrawal of international troops will not end the international engagement with Afghanistan, and we will continue to further strengthen our engagement with the country.

How do you imagine the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security context will look like in 2030?

This is a question that I get asked on a regular basis – a look into the crystal ball. Well, I suspect that we will still be around. I would like to believe that regional instability in Afghanistan and the Mediterranean will have disappeared, and that there is a steady improvement in human rights standards and democratic practices. I would also hope for positive change in some of the long-standing conflicts in our region – in Transnistria or Nagorno-Karabakh, for example. I am an optimist – for sure, we will make great headway over the next decades. We have already put a number of instruments in place to prevent conflicts from happening or, at least, from escalating. And we are improving our mediation support capabilities, helping conflicting sides find common ground for a settlement. But there is definitely more work to be done, perhaps for a generation or more.

# Giving substance to the vision of a security community

A joint initiative by four European think tanks

By Wolfgang Zellner

At its 2010 Astana Summit meeting, the 56 OSCE states embraced the bold “vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok.” This means nothing less than a region where conflicts are resolved without war and without the threat of war.

However, the vision of Astana plays as of yet no visible role in the politics of our governments. It is virtually non-existent in the public awareness. And although there have been some theoretical discussions in the tradition of the famous US-American scientist Karl Deutsch and his colleagues, who initially formulated this in the mid-1950s, it is rather unclear, even among scholars, what a security community means in practical terms for the OSCE region of today.

IDEAS – the Initiative for the Development of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Security Community – strives to close this gap. Set up in 2011 by the Centre for OSCE Research, the Fondation pour la Recher-

che Stratégique (Paris), the Polish Institute of International Affairs, and the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University) of the Russian Foreign Ministry, it has the goal to elaborate conceptual elements for a future security community. IDEAS is supported by the foreign ministers of Germany, France, Poland and Russia.

Whoever embarks on such an ambitious project has to first ask a number of basic questions: Is there a real need to set up a security community? What are the most crucial elements of “security”? What does “security community” mean under today’s conditions? Are there different understandings of this term? Are our States closer to establishing a security community today than they were twenty years ago? If not, what significant events have prevented this? Why have States not succeeded in translating their declaratory objectives into actual security behaviour? What are the obstacles? Which institutions already best provide elements of a future

security community? What initial steps should be taken to advance the process toward a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community? What can the OSCE contribute to the development of a security community?

This is why the four institutes have decided to organize four workshops in Berlin, Warsaw, Paris and Moscow between March and July 2012, each time with different constituencies. Every workshop focuses on a specific group of countries and includes representatives from the states in question, so as to include as many viewpoints as possible. The first three workshops have already taken place, with the participation of the Irish OSCE Chairmanship and the Organization’s Secretariat.

It is still too early to judge what outcome can be expected from these debates. What is certain, however, is that they will kick off an urgently needed thought process on the idea of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community. After the July workshop in Moscow, the four insti-

tutes will formulate a joint report that will be presented in autumn 2012 to the OSCE community. The report will contain an analysis of the current situation, a general strategic outline as well as specific recommendations for OSCE action.

The IDEAS think tanks understand their cooperation with the OSCE not as a one-time event. Rather, they strive for a more continuous co-operation in line with the proposal of Secretary General Lamberto Zannier to create a network of academic institutions that can help to find salient answers to the burning security questions of the present and future.

**Dr. Wolfgang Zellner** heads the Centre for OSCE Research, and is Deputy Director of the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg. His research areas include European security issues, conventional arms control, ethno-political conflicts and transnational threats and risks.

## Taking courage from the women of Bosnia and Herzegovina

By Swanee Hunt and Mirsad Jacevic



Photo: OSCE/Bela Szandelszky

The civil conflicts of the late 1990s brought great suffering to the people in south-eastern Europe, whether in the besieged towns of Bosnia and Herzegovina or, as in this picture, to the refugees of Kosovo

The nature of violent conflict has shifted in recent decades, from the domain of states to internal struggles embroiling non-combatants in prolonged instability. Civilians – particularly women – aren’t only primary victims, they’re also experts. Yet our model of security still relies on engaging hard line politicians or those who hold the guns – and, in some cases, both. Although Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has made women’s participation in peace and security a priority, most policymakers don’t seek them out and thus overlook key insights that would enable more effective intervention and reconstruction.

In contrast, the concept of “inclusive security” calls for all stakeholders to be represented in peace processes. Research by scholars such as Anthony Wanis St. John shows that participatory agreements are more sustainable and just; as countries rebuild from the consequences of violence, peoples can’t be represented solely by those responsible for the devastation. Specifically, we’ve been awed by the power of women to prevent war, resolve it, and restore their societies.

Bosnia and Herzegovina exemplifies this. The women with whom we’ve worked over

the past twenty years were the one constituency that consistently reached across ethnic lines, braving sniper fire to mobilize for a peaceful future. Women told us of a long history of coexistence and intermarriage among Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks (Muslims). Before the war, they said, they celebrated each other’s holidays. Ethnic identity was not salient, not relevant to everyday life. As Tuzla engineer Alenka Savic said succinctly: “This was not our war.”

Because most women understood the real causes of the war – greed and power lust of nationalist leaders – they were the first to bridge the conflict divides, co-ordinating in networks such as Žena 21. When necessary, they edited by candlelight and, despite shelling, distributed a free monthly magazine. Žena 21 became an outlet of hope for besieged citizens. Groups like theirs (we know of about forty) emphasized a common identity as mothers, daughters, and sisters rather than identifying with schisms manipulated by those who profit from war.

Women had a better sense than the international community of what was happening in their country. In June 1996 they organized a conference titled “Women Transforming Ourselves and Society,” the first gathering

after the war to include participants from throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. The organizers planned for a hundred, but throngs more showed up. Thirty-five percent risked checkpoints and retaliation to come from Republika Srpska. For most, it was their first encounter with “the other” after the war, but, though the scars ran fresh and deep, women had the courage and foresight to join hearts and minds to develop tangible plans for long-term social healing.

One priority was education: It was crucial to revive the integrated school systems and develop a curriculum emphasizing tolerance. No one listened, and a generation later the OSCE is still fighting to reverse “two schools under one roof.”

Then in July 1996, activist Beba Hadjic and others organized the first commemoration of the genocide of Srebrenica. More than 4,000 survivors filled a Tuzla sports stadium to hear assurances of help from Queen Noor of Jordan, Emma Bonino of the European Commission, one of Argentina’s Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, and a representative of President Clinton. As early as 1996 Vice Chair of the Association of Mothers of Srebrenica Kada Hotic, declared that Annex 7 of the Dayton Agreement – a provision

related to refugee return, which the international community had heralded as a great victory for human rights – would never be implemented. How could refugees return to areas still controlled by police forces that a year before had been committing atrocities to create “ethnically pure” enclaves?

There are a hundred more examples of how women could’ve enriched both the process and substantive outcomes of our intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina. And there have been a thousand examples globally since. Too often, we observe how the contributions of half the population are dismissed as “women’s issues” rather than the stuff of war and peace. In short, whether in Korea, Congo, or Colombia, we must expand our security paradigm as we confront global challenges that lie ahead.

**Swanee Hunt** is a former ambassador to Austria and the chair of The Institute for Inclusive Security based in Washington, D.C. In her latest book, *Worlds Apart: Bosnian Lessons for Global Security*, she presents a new paradigm for foreign policy. Mirsad Jacevic is vice chair of the Institute and led its programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia and Liberia.

# Finding credible answers to new threats

By Francis Maertens



An OSCE college in Tajikistan trains customs officials, border guards and drug control personnel on border management strategies, which includes field visits to e.g. demining projects at the Tajik-Afghan border.

In recent years, global security concerns by national law enforcement agencies and international organizations have increasingly been dominated by what is nowadays labelled as “transnational threats.” These threats are marked by new forms of criminal behaviour, based on different structures and operations than those of the “classic” mafia groups and drug cartels. Their development is directly linked with the rapid integration of global markets, free movement of trade, goods and people, and the growing sophistication of information and communication technology.

The United Nations estimates that organized crime generates around US\$ 870 billion in profits every year. Over 60 per cent of this turnover is produced by trafficking in drugs, followed by other forms of crime such as the trafficking of human beings – especially women and children for sex exploitation – illegal migration, trafficking in small arms and in counterfeit products or natural resources. In addition, the Internet

has provided a tremendous opportunity for criminal activities, such as the hacking of credit cards, identity theft or online child abuse, as well as cyber terrorism.

There are various common features of these transnational threats. As the term indicates, they involve criminal groups that cross international borders with ease. Globalisation has allowed them to access a worldwide market for illicit goods, which are sourced in one region, trafficked across another, and marketed in a third. These goods are either moved into major economic markets, or emanate from them. The groups are also often able to take advantage of weak public institutions that have a limited capacity to react, coupled with a widespread culture of corrupt practices. Sometimes law enforcement agencies show reluctance to share intelligence information with neighbouring countries, or there is a lack of harmonized data, norms, standards and legislation – yet another opportunity for criminal networks to find loopholes.

Responding credibly to these threats must be based on regional law enforcement mechanisms and improved co-operation among national police agencies on transnational organized crime issues. This in turn means that law enforcement staff must increase their expertise on how to efficiently fight drug trafficking, the smuggling of chemicals, cybercrime, and the trafficking of human beings. Finally, programmes are needed to counter extremism and radicalization; train and equip specialists to efficiently screen freight shipments and travellers; and to facilitate the exchange of information on counter-terrorism activities.

Here is where the OSCE comes in. At their annual meeting in Vilnius last year, the foreign ministers of the 56 OSCE participating States decided that the Organization was well-placed to address transnational threats, since it fits hand-in-glove with its politico-military approach to security questions, alongside the human and

economic-environmental dimensions. As a first step, the Organization grouped its existing expertise and resources in the areas of policing, border management and counter-terrorism, and created a new department that is uniquely focused on transnational threats.

This is but a beginning. Responses to these new threats must be as complex and comprehensive as the threats themselves. They need to address some of the root causes just as much as the criminal justice elements that are mandated to fight the threats. Moreover, the responses must be innovative and fast, always one step ahead of the activities of the criminal networks. Such efforts cannot be carried by law enforcement alone; all sectors of society – public and private – have to shoulder some of the responsibility in this fight.

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*“We are determined to work together to fully realize the vision of a comprehensive, co-operative and indivisible security community throughout our shared OSCE area.”*

Astana Commemorative Declaration, 3 December 2010

For the longest time, security questions have been viewed by most as an issue that should be tackled by people in uniform, or possibly civilian peacekeepers in white SUVs patrolling former conflict lines. Since 9/11, however, this concept is somewhat antiquated. While arms control, joint military manoeuvres and international police co-operation remain de rigueur among security experts, new threats have generated a need for fresh responses.

The 56 OSCE participating States have recognized this at a summit meeting in Astana in December 2010. In their final declaration, they underlined the importance of conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures, but also emphasized that “in today’s complex and inter-connected world, we must achieve greater unity of purpose and action in facing emerging transnational

threats”. The list of such threats is long, reaching from terrorism to cyber crime, from trafficking in arms, drugs and human beings to illegal migration and organized criminal networks.

The Astana summit also gave further prominence to a concept that has its origins in the ideas of a Czech political scientist of the 1950s. In 1957, Karl W. Deutsch, who was interested in the concepts behind conflict, nationalism and cooperation, had developed a definition of what he called a “security community”: a group of people who have become integrated to such a point that there is a “real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way.” The concept has become further refined over the years, but its basic tenets continue to be influential.

Every year, the OSCE nations meet in Vienna for an “Annual Security Review Conference”, an event that hides behind its diplomatic title a wide array of topics related to “hard” security questions. The talks are between “interlocutors” – military and security experts conferring behind closed doors. Not so for a new event that will precede this year’s Conference – the so-called “Security Days.” Taking place in the sumptuous halls of the Vienna Hofburg Palace on 24 and 25 June, this event will for the first time bring in academics, think tank representatives and civil society.

The rationale behind this move is to look for fresh impetus and new ideas among a more varied audience, and to feed in their suggestions and contributions to the mainstream track of political decision-making. Ideas emanating from outside the traditional channels may bring about more

immediate results than direct diplomatic intervention, which is why it is sometimes called, among the initiated, informal or “Track II” diplomacy.

A central element at the Security Days event will be a discussion on the role of reconciliation to help solve long-standing conflicts. The idea of bringing in communities to usher along a peaceful solution to smouldering tensions – alongside the official political and diplomatic negotiations – is slowly gaining traction and has already started to show some results. In fact, many of the OSCE’s projects in the field explicitly work with communities and small civic groups to bring along concrete progress – whether they are inter-ethnic confidence-building initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina or Kosovo, or border guard and police officer training modules in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia or Tajikistan.

# More than a military challenge

## Building a co-operative security community

By Alyson JK Bailes, University of Iceland

Good security today means tackling many non-military threats to nations and their peoples. Since 2001 we have acknowledged the challenges posed by other forms of violence, such as terrorism and piracy. The global crash of 2008 drew attention to the many security ramifications of economic hardship. Climate change poses longer-term threats in all aspects of life.

Challenges of this kind ignore international and national borders, making no distinction between political friends and foes. They should remind us of the common security interests that mankind shares, and give a strong impulse for building a co-operative security community.

Indeed, in the OSCE, all participating nations have agreed that these are issues of common concern and subjects for co-operation. But this common human agenda has not overcome the divisive effect of other issues – mainly military and political – that have damaged the atmosphere and slowed down progress across the OSCE agenda as a whole. Why could this be?

First, even when non-military risks spread widely, their impact and local experiences of them can be quite different. The natural disasters people fear in Central Asia or the Mediterranean are not the same as in the Nordic region or the Urals. Economic challenges depend on one's structure and level of development; terrorism and crime are huge challenges for some societies and almost unknown in others.

People can also have very different subjective views about handling such challenges. Even if they trust their own government agencies to deal with them, it does not mean they would be happy to put their lives in the hands of police from a neighbouring country. Even closely-integrated EU states have diverse legal frameworks for internal security, and may not have a legal base to

accept foreign personnel for such tasks. Such problems would be multiplied by working with the full range of OSCE nations.

The OSCE itself faces considerable limitations when contemplating action in such areas. Risks and threats in non-military sectors are usually best tackled by laws, regulations, and applying money and other practical resources. The OSCE, however, is not a law-making body and its budget is not designed to finance large projects.

Above all: any purely European or Eurasian institution can only play a limited role in tackling what are often truly global phenomena. The boundaries these phenomena cross include those of the OSCE itself. If they are localized, neighbourhood groupings (e.g. in the Baltic or Black Sea regions) offer a better framework. When the impact is larger, the UN – and agencies like the World Health Organization – are the obvious solution both for regulation and response.

So we cannot expect such issues to 'save' the OSCE from its disagreements and inherent weaknesses. But it still has several important functions: as a forum for dialogue, by exchanging information and experience, identifying common goals and standards, and maybe acting as a clearing-house for emergency assistance. Any such co-ordination is a valuable input to handling the issues at the global level. With all its problems, the OSCE area is still richer and more peaceful than many parts of the world today. We should set the best example we can in all parts of the modern security agenda.

**Alyson JK Bailes** is a former British diplomat and Director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), now teaching security studies at the University of Iceland and College of Europe.



Photo: OSCE/Jonathan Perfect

In a few years' time – August 2015, to be precise – 56 countries from Europe, North America and Asia will commemorate an important date: the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. For today's generation, this document might not mean all that much – but fact is, when it was concluded in 1975 it completely changed the Euro-Atlantic security architecture. It fundamentally and step-by-step re-defined East-West relations and gave birth to the world's largest regional security organization, later named the OSCE.

Not even one generation later, we stand at a different crossroads. The trust and confidence gained in Helsinki seem to have dissipated. While no European war is looming – neither hot nor cold – the hard lessons learned since 1975 and during the many conflicts of the

1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union appear to have largely been forgotten. Yes, we have arms control and conflict prevention tools, conflict resolution mechanisms and post-conflict rehabilitation tools. But we also have many unresolved security questions in the OSCE region, spanning from so-called transnational threats – not between regular armies but organized crime or terror networks – to ethnic frictions, to "protracted" conflicts and regional distrust.

Perhaps it is time for a new security paradigm. Perhaps we need something more than arms control and traditional diplomatic negotiating formats. Every international organization needs to continuously adapt itself to the prevailing environment, and consequently a security organization must look closely at the changes in the overall security environment. To bring about greater security for a population can take many forms; one successful model that could turn into a new ground strategy for the OSCE is based on the concept of reconciliation.

Reconciliation comes in three different forms: first, as a historical concept among states, such as between France and Germany after WWII, or between

One of the longstanding – or, in diplomatic jargon, "protracted" – conflicts in the OSCE region is the one over Nagorno-Karabakh, a landlocked area in the southern Caucasus. In the early 1990s, a bitter war raged with thousands of casualties and hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced. The fighting ended in May 1994 when a cease-fire was declared, but the situation remains fragile.

In March 1992, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (predecessor to the OSCE) requested the Chairman-in-Office to convene a conference on Nagorno-Karabakh, to provide an ongoing forum for negotiations toward a peaceful settlement of the crisis on the basis of the principles and commitments of the CSCE. The conference was to be held in Minsk but was cancelled due to the escalation in hostilities, and it has as yet not been possible to hold it. The group of countries that were going to participate became known as the Minsk Group. Two years

later, the CSCE appointed a group of diplomats as "co-chairs" of the Minsk process, with the task to develop a framework for the resolution of the conflict; to help negotiate an agreement ending the conflict and to promote the deployment of OSCE multinational peacekeeping forces. These co-chairs are currently represented by France, the Russian Federation and the United States.

Despite these efforts, a peace agreement has been elusive to this day. At their most recent meeting in Sochi, Russia, in January 2012 the Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents again committed themselves to "accelerate" the pace towards an agreement, to work on a mechanism to investigate ceasefire violations, and to develop humanitarian contacts. However, monitors on the ground regularly report on skirmishes along the "line of contact", and every year several dozens of soldiers and civilians are injured or killed with a serious escalation of incidents reported in early June 2012.

## Building bridges across the Dniestr/Nistru

Wedge between the Dniestr/Nistru and the eastern border of Moldova lies a strip of land that has all the usual trappings of a nation-state: a president, government, parliament, police, military, national anthem and coat of arms. And yet, it completely lacks international recognition and few will have ever heard of it. This is the "Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic" – or Transdniestria, for short – a territory that in 1990 declared its independence.

In 1992, tensions between the Transdniestrian authorities and the central government in Chisinau escalated into violent conflict. After a brief period of fighting, the violent stage of the conflict ended in July 1992 with

the signing of a cease-fire agreement, which holds until today. Despite the end of actual hostilities, the situation remains complicated.

Since 1993, the OSCE, which has offices in Chisinau, Tiraspol and Bender, has supported efforts to find a comprehensive, durable and peaceful solution to the conflict. The talks on a settlement comprised Moldova and Transdniestria as the sides to the conflict and the OSCE, Russian Federation and Ukraine as mediators. In 2005, the EU and USA joined the process as observers and the format became known as the "5+2." The official "5+2" negotiations came to a halt in February 2006, and were resumed only in November 2011.

## "It's time to gain back trust"

By Adam Kobieracki, OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre

Poland and the Russian Federation over the last couple of years. Secondly, it plays its part in the conflict settlement process. This is particularly true for the protracted conflicts in the OSCE region, whether in Eastern Europe or the southern Caucasus. And finally, reconciliation is also a tool to pre-empt conflict rather than to solve already existing ones. In fact, bridging differences between people, states and regions, establishing a dialogue and creating trust – these notions make sense at all stages of the conflict cycle, from early warning to post-conflict intervention.

We might need new tools for this. The OSCE does not have too strong an institutional memory in dealing with reconciliation measures. But at the same time, it is already engaged in many activities that build trust, strengthen confidence. The bits and pieces are there – whether we are bringing together people from Moldova and Transdniestria for music concerts, reach out to minorities in southern Kyrgyzstan, or help establish ethnically mixed police forces in Skopje. All these are elements that are needed for a comprehensive strategy on reconciliation in the OSCE region, and we should take the opportunity of the

forthcoming anniversary of the Final Act to consolidate and extend our work on this.

Keeping one's ears close to the ground, one often hears politicians say one thing while the population wants something entirely different. This is particularly true for a situation of conflict – official peace negotiations are underway and seem promising – but what the people want is revenge, not peace. It is this problem that we have to address, and we need to build up the capacity for it. Once we are committed to such a strategy, there will be no limits for creative solutions other than those generated by the situation on the ground. In some areas, we will have to tiptoe. In others, we might be able to make swift progress. But act we must – this is the heritage of Helsinki.

**Adam Kobieracki** is a Polish diplomat who has been involved in European security policy since the early 1980s. Since 2011, he heads the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, an office that forms part of the Organization's Secretariat in Vienna and maintains the strategic relationship with field operations on the ground.