

Chairmanship: Greece

**REPORT BY AMBASSADOR ANTTI TURUNEN,
CHAIRMAN OF THE CONTACT GROUP WITH THE ASIAN
PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION TO THE ATHENS MEETING OF
THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ON THE WORK WITH THE
ASIAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION IN 2009**

Athens Ministerial Council, 1 and 2 December 2009

Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking the Asian Partners for Co-operation for their excellent work and support throughout the year. Indeed, 2009 has been a year dense with events and innovation for our Contact Group, in which many important new initiatives were taken.

Special credit goes first of all to Greece for its decision to appoint Mr. Theodore Kotsonis as Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office for the Asian Partners for Co-operation. His work and role have been important for our Group, and we all look forward to his report and his ideas on how to strengthen our dialogue further. I hope that the incoming Kazakh Chairmanship will continue this innovative approach next year.

The work of the Asian Contact Group has seen an important change in 2009, giving our Asian Partners full ownership of the debate. Five meetings were held in 2009, which were marked by increased interaction and debate, thanks to the presentations made by the Asian Partners at each of these meetings.

We started with our meeting in February, in which Afghanistan made a presentation on border security and management and the upcoming presidential elections. The briefing conducted by Ambassador Shoogufan was indeed instrumental in allowing our Permanent Council in April to adopt its Decision No. 891 on the deployment of an election support team for the third time in its history. The team has now successfully completed its assignment. Although no longer in the Troika next year, Finland will continue to be an active promoter of the OSCE's support to Afghanistan in the future.

At our second meeting, in May, Japan led a discussion on human security and democratic institution-building, and in this connection invited a special speaker,

Mr. Kazuo Tase, Chief of the Human Security Unit, United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The discussion centred on the work of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, and we learned that the Fund aims at integrating the responses by international organizations, central and local governments and civil society. Many existing OSCE activities were also highlighted as having particular relevance to human security.

The follow-up to the 2007 OSCE-Mongolia Conference, including on measures to promote the interests of landlocked countries as well as development of democratic governance indicators, was the subject of a discussion led by Mongolia at our July meeting. Ambassador Enkhsaikhan informed us of Mongolia's continued policy of structural prevention, focusing on promoting mutual confidence with and between its two immediate neighbours, which included presenting to its immediate neighbours a draft trilateral treaty that would define its nuclear-weapon-free status. He also brought to our attention the fact that Mongolia has taken a decision to set up an international think-tank to strengthen the analytical capacity to address the challenges of landlocked countries and their greater integration into regional and global trading systems. Our Group also found inspiration in Mongolia's experience in drawing up national democratic governance indicators.

In September, Korea led discussions in the Contact Group on the subject of analyzing North Korea's motives and considering how the international community, including the "Five Parties", should respond. The participants stressed that North Korea must be denuclearized in a complete and verifiable manner; that relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions should be faithfully and effectively implemented; and that the North Korean nuclear issue should be resolved through diplomatic means within the framework of the Six-Party Talks. The importance of bringing North Korea back to the Six-Party Talks, as well as of maintaining co-operation among the Five Parties, was also emphasized. And it was made clear that bilateral contact between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States or any other country is not a substitute for the Six-Party Talks.

Thailand took the lead at our last meeting, in November, with a discussion on co-operation between the OSCE and the ASEAN Regional Forum. After providing a useful overview of the nature and activities of the ARF, Ambassador Phetcharatana stressed his country's determination to strengthen relations between the ARF and the OSCE, especially on matters related to confidence-building measures and preventive diplomacy. This viewpoint was welcomed and supported by the Contact Group. The meeting was further enriched by a discussion with Ambassador Potts of Australia on the possibilities for co-operation and strengthening of relations between Australia and the OSCE, which also touched on the topic of the Asia-Pacific regional security architecture. In the discussions that followed the presentation, the participants in the Contact Group meeting encouraged Australia to pursue closer relations with the OSCE.

Finally, on 11 December, we will have the traditional joint meeting of the Asian and Mediterranean Contact Groups, which will give us an opportunity to discuss issues that are shared by the two groups. In particular, we will discuss the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security from the point of view of the Partners. This discussion will give us an opportunity to lay the foundations for our future work, which is particularly important in light of the decision that is expected to be taken here in Athens on the future of the Corfu Process. In addition, the joint meeting will also discuss the current state of the Partnership Fund and a way forward.

OSCE-Japan Conference. As usual, the highlight of the year was the annual conference with the Asian Partners, which this year was hosted by Japan in Tokyo on 10 and 11 June. The main theme was “*Sharing knowledge and experiences between the OSCE participating States and the Asian Partners for Co-operation to address common challenges*”. The Conference focused on three key issues: enhancing confidence-building through military transparency; energy security dialogue; and civil society development, including the media.

The discussions on enhancing confidence-building took place against the backdrop of the recent nuclear and missile tests by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, leading some speakers to note that the DPRK risked bringing about an escalation of tension and an undesirable arms race, and therefore multilateral co-operation should be strengthened rather than weakened. Furthermore, while issues such as military transparency and freedom of the media had long been hallmarks of the OSCE, energy security was a relatively new topic for the Organization. There was a clear benefit in hearing about the experience of the Asian Partners, as energy security was a global issue, and solutions needed to be global in scope. The OSCE participating States and the Asian Partners also agreed on the need to continue promoting freedom of the media as a fundamental ingredient in transparent, peaceful and modern societies.

Following up on similar initiatives in 2007 and 2008, Finland, together with Belgium, sponsored a *Meeting on Multilateral Security Co-operation in Northeast Asia and the Relevance of OSCE Experience*, which took place in Vienna on 23 and 24 April. It was financed through the Partnership Fund, and was jointly organized by the Austrian Centre for International Studies and the Finnish Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group. Twenty-three participants took part in the Meeting, from the participating States, the Asian Partners and countries of the Six-Party Talks. The Meeting emphasized aspects of CSCE/OSCE experience, such as the importance of agreed guiding principles, dialogue on an equal footing and confidence-building, and the need for some form of human dimension, such as people-to-people contacts. This experience by the OSCE was considered especially useful for a multilateral security co-operation mechanism in Northeast Asia, with the necessary adjustments to reflect the different regional realities.

One further initiative was taken by Mongolia from 20 to 24 April, when it organized a Conference in Ulaanbaatar on *the Present and Future Security Environment in Northeast and Central Asia: Ulaanbaatar as a New Helsinki?* The Conference focused on issues such as challenges for security and confidence-building in Central and East Asia, the European examples of neutrality/security and confidence-building measures, and security and security co-operation in Asia through dialogue. The CSCE/OSCE model was presented as an example for a possible security architecture in Asia. Finland participated and provided a recollection of the negotiations that led to the signature of the Helsinki Final Act.

Partnership Fund. Finland, as one of the Troika members that initially promoted establishment of the Fund, continued supporting it. Part of the Finnish contribution of €250,000 was used to finance an election assistance project for the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan, which was jointly implemented by the ODIHR and the Secretariat’s External Co-operation Section, and the above-mentioned Meeting on *Multilateral Security Co-operation in Northeast Asia and the Relevance of OSCE Experience*. Finland also sponsored the participation by a representative of Mongolia’s National Census

Bureau in the ODIHR's expert meeting on population registration that took place in Vienna on 30 and 31 March, that of a Mongolian expert in the OSCE/WCO Integrity Development Seminar held in Astana on 5 and 6 May 2009, and that of the representatives from Afghanistan and Mongolia in the 2009 OSCE-Japan Conference.

Pursuant to the adoption of Permanent Council Decisions Nos. 902 and 903, for the first time the Partnership Fund will be used in 2010 to finance events held in the territory of a Partner for Co-operation. In January 2010, a *Workshop on Combating Illicit Crop Cultivation and Enhancing Border Security and Management: Thailand as a Case Study* will be held in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, Thailand, and in February 2010, an *International Expert Workshop on Combating Modern Slavery: National, Regional and International Experiences* will be held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Finland fully supported the process of adopting both decisions, and will be providing financial contributions for the events. Both events will be held in the format of a 2010 Chairmanship event.

In conclusion, allow me to stress once again that the year 2009 has been a year of considerable innovation for the Asian Partners. As a result, our dialogue has focused strongly on Asia as a region, and has allowed the participating States and the Asian Partners to have frank and informative debates on the many issues that affect security in both our regions, many of which have a global impact on security. My gratitude goes to the Asian Partners first and foremost, but also to the Greek Chairmanship of the OSCE for its unstinting and valuable support throughout the year and to the OSCE Secretary General and the External Co-operation Section, as usual the backbone of our work. The dynamic co-operation between the Asian Partners and the OSCE could serve as a model for OSCE's activities in many areas. I wish every success to the incoming Greek Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group under the guidance of the Kazakh OSCE Chairmanship.

Thank you.