



THE OSCE: ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROSPECTS

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WELCOME/MODERATOR:

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SPEAKER:

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JAMES COLLINS: Let me welcome all of you. On behalf of the Carnegie Endowment, I'm Jim Collins. I run the Russia-Eurasia program at Carnegie Endowment. And it's my very great pleasure this afternoon to introduce our speaker, Ambassador Marc de Brichambaut, who is the secretary general of the Organization for Security and Cooperation and who has –

MARC DE BRICHAMBAUT: In Europe. (Laughs.)

MR. COLLINS: Yes, in Europe – and who has been in this office for approaching, or I guess already five years, and is paying his final visit to Washington in that capacity. And I thought it was a particularly good time, and he has graciously agreed to give us his own perspective on the last five years or so and his thoughts about how OSCE can be an effective process and structure in the development of European security and Eurasian security going forward.

And so I am very pleased to introduce him to you. He'll speak for a few minutes, and then we can have a discussion with him. And I believe this will be a worthwhile session for all of you.

So Ambassador de Brichambaut, the floor is yours.

MR. DE BRICHAMBAUT: Ambassador, thank you very much. And thank you very much, all of you, for being here.

I must say, I've recently greatly benefited from the wisdom of the ambassador, because with a group he came to Vienna. And thinking about future Euro-Atlantic security developments, and very pertinent and sharp questions which were put to us, have led me to try and share with you a few points.

As you may have seen, I have entitled my presentation to you – I hope it won't be too long – four questions on security institutions deriving from the OSCE experiment.

Just a word why I made that choice. I think OSCE is pretty unique. It has a very unusual track record. It resembles practically no other institution – no other international organization. And at the same time, I believe it is a model which is remarkably well suited for the challenges of the 21st century, the way it has evolved over the years in a very pragmatic, ad hoc way, and in a very unexpected way; the successive additions which were made by those who take responsibility for the organization.

Last year it was Kazakhstan. And I'm very honored that Ambassador Idrissov should be with us today, because I will have a lot of good things to say about the achievements of the Astana summit, the first one in the 21st century that the organization had, should have us thinking about how the experience of OSCE can be a template for global governance in the 21st century; not a small ambition I have, but I will try and convince you that there are few elements in the OSCE experience that justify such a broad perspective.

Let me start by saying do not consider OSCE to be in the same league as the big international institutions. It is not an institution. First, it doesn't have a charter. It is still half of a process. It is still basically more of a forum than an institution. But it is an unusual forum in the sense that it is supported by something quite unique, which is a solid foundation of commitments which were entered into the early '90s but which, most of them, were reconfirmed in

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Astana on the 2nd of December of 2010. And that showed that we're still relevant, that we're still alive, and that we're still acceptable for all 56 heads of state and government which were present.

Second, it has something also very unusual. It has – what would you say if a European commission said - of a European Union that has three commissions? Well, we have autonomous institutions, the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the representative on freedom of the media, the high commissioner for national minorities, which has the autonomy and specificity and right to express themselves in a way not dissimilar to the (unique construction ?), which is the European Commission.

And third, it has a unique practice. Twice a week, on Wednesdays, is the forum for security cooperation, and on Thursdays for the permanent council. Fifty-six ambassadors sit around the table, plus the 12 partners, Mediterranean partners, Asian partners. And they are free to raise any aspect of their security which they find relevant, and in all dimensions, if I may say. This is a unique experience. It's a unique body.

On top of it, it is a body that reaches decisions by consensus. So imagine a security council that has 56 veto-wielding powers. Your immediate reaction is this thing should be dead a long time ago. It should never have worked. Well, not only does it work, but it has been working for the last 35 years plus. And it's doing quite well.

And once again, at a summit recently, it managed to agree on a very powerful text, the commemorative declaration of Astana. And it was quite close to agreeing on a plan of action which is a nine-page document which was quite ambitious. And we came probably within one vote of having it on board.

So think about it. When climate-change negotiations take place, what is it? Consensus of all members of the United Nations, with a small secretariat and a sort of permanent openness in dialogue.

My first question – and it's a question; it's not an assertion – how can a flexible multilateral security arrangement help address diverse security challenges? Multinational, flexible, diverse. The OSCE has a track record of doing that.

Let me revert to my preceding point. Having a forum which allows any problem to be raised at any moment makes it possible for any participating state or those who are around the table, because sometimes international organizations also inspire certain participating states to raise whatever points they see fit, at whatever moment of the conflict cycle, be it early warning, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, plus conflict rehabilitation.

And our practice is that it is increasingly difficult to identify at what moment of the conflict cycle you are in those issues we raise, because very often a conflict which has already occurred could reoccur, and you move from post-conflict rehabilitation to early warning in a very brief time.

The forum is steered – and that's another specificity which you will find in other international organizations – by one participating state, which has political responsibility for it, currently Lithuania, and last year Kazakhstan. And the responsibilities of the chairman in office are quite heavy. The chairman in office really has to steer the agenda and basically is the inventor of the consensus.

Without a chairman in office, it is impossible to bring together all the participating states, a common solution. And that, like any multilateral organization, entails endless coffees, lunches, dinners, makes multilateral diplomats very busy, very happy, but, in a way, effective.

Other characteristics that the OSCE has tried, this cross-dimensional approach. It was the three baskets of Helsinki. And if you read current documents, the recent World Bank report on conflict and development, the recent report by

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the State Department on diplomacy and development, the NATO strategic concept – well, I'm not modest. It's all about OSCE values. It's all about the idea that, in order to address conflicts, you have to be able to mobilize the whole spectrum of civilian capabilities. You have to be able to address economic dimension, all facets of the human dimension, the problems of minorities, the problems of IDPs.

So the fact that others are doing it, of course, means we are in good company. It also shows how infinitely difficult it is to bring together, in practical projects and strategies, all those issues, because those reports – it is almost cyclical – have rediscovered this issue.

One of the areas where the OSCE has been moving forward also collectively is the area of transnational threats, threats which are impossible to address within the borders of one single participating state, which therefore require a collective approach. And we have been involved in anti-terrorism, in combating trafficking in human beings.

Currently we have a conference going on right now in cybersecurity. These are awareness-raising exercises. The way the OSCE operates is not to create a bureaucracy to address a problem. It is to bring together the experts, to have them debate, sometimes debate at length, and develop concepts, and then transform this into a perspective; so a rather talkative and messy process, but one in which all participating states are together on an equal footing under the aegis of the chairman in office, supported by a very small secretariat, and seek to find solutions by awareness-raising and involvement of all the participating states.

The downside of this approach – because, OK, we've managed to survive and keep it going for 35 years, but many things have changed in between. The first thing that has changed is the role that OSCE has developed for itself is not at all the role it was meant to have. Initially the OSCE was an avatar of the Soviet concept of the common house. And both in Paris charter and in the Helsinki ministerial meeting and summit of '92, the OSCE was going to be the overarching architecture of security.

You know very well this is not what happened. Ultimately the expansion of NATO, the expansion of the EU, the role of the U.N. in crisis like the Balkans, sort of marginalized the OSCE, which became more of a niche organization with a very strong basis in hard security, a very strong and developing commitment to the human dimension, and an emphasis on dealing with a few protracted conflicts, so-called protracted conflicts, which were basically in Moldova, in Georgia, and in Nagorno-Karabakh, the heritages of the decolonization of the Soviet Union.

So OSCE is not alone anymore. Others share the same ambitions. Others share the same broad focus on multidimensional issues. It has to combine its activity with the activity of the other organizations, which it does. It does so, for instance, in Geneva, for the talks regarding the situation in Abkhazia and in South Ossetia. It does so in Kyrgyzstan, in trying to defuse the situation in southern Kyrgyzstan, where it works with the EU and with the U.N. This is a new practice and a practical practice.

Second weakness: It's good to say that you're going to address multidimensional things, that you are going to address problems in a multidimensional way, that you're going to address transnational threats. It's another thing to develop real strategies which have the support of your participating states, which translates into perspectives of action, which bring on board civil society and which can sort of bring in the time factor, the need to make progress over time.

And on this, to be honest – I will come back to this – the OSCE has not been at its best because it's already very difficult to bring the 56 on identifying a common problem. Devising a full strategy to address it is much more complicated. You can do it for a given crisis, at a given moment. It's very hard to do it sort of permanently.

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In other words, the OSCE today, in terms of being that flexible multilateral security arrangement, has to combine its efforts, has to show the EU and the NATO that it can be a playing field where they determine their own security strategies, where they interact with Russia, with Turkey, as far as the EU is concerned, with Central Asian states, with Caucasian states, more than a full-fledged actor, a playing field more than an actor.

I have to pay tribute to the copyright which comes from Paul Rich (sp). But I think it's a very powerful image altogether and shows that the ways of creating international institutions are often quite crooked and unexpected.

Second question: Can this concept, which I've already referred to, of cross-dimensional security be made to work in an operative way, either in the short term or in the long term? This is a very big question, because, as I mentioned, this concept of cross-dimensional security, leading to the concept of democratic transition, is something which intellectually is gaining more and more recognition, even though the OSCE might have been among the first to develop it. But transforming this into a coherent vision, translating it into policies, providing a step-by-step implementation of those policies, is quite a different exercise.

And on this, maybe OSCE has not been as bold or as effective as it might have been. First, as it comes to debating, each of the baskets which have evolved into dimensions of the OSCE, is addressed in a separate framework, in a separate forum. For instance, now in Vienna we have a security committee, which is dedicated basically to transnational threat issues. We have an economic and environment dimension committee. We have a human dimension committee, which addresses the broad spectrum of the human-dimension issues.

Arms control issues are treated on the margins of the permanent council as part of the joint consultative group. There is OSCE – the open-skies, sorry, consultative committee also; so a variety of different frameworks, with each specialist, the people who have a memory of the understanding, of the background, of the texts. It's very difficult to bring all those threads together into a common set of perspectives.

It is great to have independent institutions, which I have highlighted. The problem, of course, is these independent autonomous institutions behave very autonomously. They follow their own interests. They follow their own track. They want to have a certain freedom of judgment. And they are reluctant to be sort of gathered under the chairmanship into a common perspective.

So for the outsiders, very often there is not one OSCE. There is six or seven OSCEs, if you count the bodies in Vienna, the different institutions, individual field operations, the parliamentary assembly, which also has a strong mind of its own. It's not simple.

Other factor which makes implementing cross-dimensional security very complicated. Whatever you do in a consensus-based organization, you have to do with the consent of the host country. And this is based on conviction. This is based on a complicated, progressive process of desire and acceptance. Unless the host country recognizes that there are things to be fixed and that OSCE is well suited to fix them, it doesn't work. And we have recent – we have currently 17 field offices.

We, in the recent period, lost two; one in Georgia, after the conflict, because the conditions were not met anymore for a consensus continuation of the mandate of this field office - it was a big field office - and recently, on the 31st of December, in Belarus, because the Belarusian authorities did not see it appropriate to extend the mandate of the office of the OSCE in Minsk. And the job of each field office, which is really the syncretical job of working a cross-dimensional way, is a – requires a lot of good touch and tact.

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Any head of a field office has to combine the desires of the host states, the mandates he gets from the 56 in Vienna, the problems of financing, the need to have flagship projects, and then he has to accommodate national minority issues, media issues, education, local government. So, altogether, even though we may be very strong on the conceptual perspective in terms of the practical implementation, we've not gone as far as we might have needed.

Needless to say, developing long-term perspectives of democratic transition is off the radar screen, because it would require the good will of the host countries and the good will of all of the 56, which is clearly more than exists currently. Yet this is exactly what business OSCE is in – assist in the long-term democratic transition and work with the participating states in making it possible for them to create the conditions for mature working democracies in all their complexity and in all the variety of their dimensions.

But you can do it. You can't mention it too often, which is interesting, because if the OSCE template is going to be of relevance for other countries who are coming out of the period of authoritarian government and who aspire to democracy – that resemblance may have come to your mind with events currently going on in Tunisia or in Egypt or, less fortunately, in other places, the process of democratic transition is certainly going to be very important. Who will assist it? How will this assistance take place? Is the odd combination that developed over time in OSCE the proper reference?

So this is really my third question. Is it possible to assist democratic transitions through an inclusive organization? And I've already, in many ways, addressed this with you.

The values which are – the common values of OSCE, which were reasserted in the context of the Astana commemorative declaration, by now are universal values. They are also values which are common in the context of the U.N., the various governments. They are the values which the EU promotes as parts of the Copenhagen criteria to become a member of the OSCE.

In fact, a lot of the works that the OSCE does in southeastern Europe is about helping the southeastern European country to progressively reach in practice the Copenhagen criteria. And ironically, it is very often the OSCE field operations which provide the analytical data to the European Commission that allows the European Commission to grade the progress achieved by those countries.

So what are the tools OSCE has to help in this process of democratic transition? You've already heard them – peer pressure to work in the forum; this constant common interaction that takes place among participating states; desire for respectability; and a few very specific and unique tools behind – besides the field offices I have mentioned; the fact that, as part of the commitments in the context of the Moscow documents, participating states invite systematically to major elections a process of election monitoring by ODIHR and by the parliamentary assembly.

In other words, for any major legislative election or for any major executive election, presidential, the practice is that if it is indeed possible and financially possible, the OSCE spends – sends, sorry – a group of long-term monitors which are there for months, two months sometimes, prepare the election, check all the elements of what makes an election process democratic, and then large groups of short-term monitors are present on polling data, are present in all the key parts of the country, observe the process. And a few days later there is a public report and a public assessment, not on whether those elections were free and fair but on whether those elections marked a progress in implementing the commitments that the host country has entered within the organization.

This process is going on as we are speaking in Albania, and the report was published a few hours ago in Tirana, quite sharply critical. And not everybody is always very happy with the reports of the OSCE, the immediate reports, which are followed usually two or three months later by an in-depth report that brings together all the elements of

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the broad assessment of the democratic transformation. We've had occasionally some very unhappy countries that thought that they were not appropriately covered.

Other tools – high commissioner of national minorities. You never hear about him. Of course, he operates in discreet diplomacy. By definition, whatever he does in order to improve the situation of national minorities, in order to provide early warning for problems, he does strictly in confidence, working with the local authorities, with the local minorities. Knut Vollebakk, former Ambassador, Washington does this job. He occasionally speaks up, expresses his views. But he is a de-miner over the long term.

Probably the most vocal tool that the OSCE has is the representative of freedom of the media, one of the institutions. She's unique. She's a woman right now, Dunja Mijatovic from Bosnia, because she expresses herself loudly. And whenever the freedom or the life or the conditions of work of journalists are at stake, including in new media, she expresses herself. She was recently at the world press day in Istanbul, and she reminded everybody that she had been protesting for the 54 Turkish journalists which are currently in jail. So this was clearly a very loud voice altogether.

So the role in assisting democratic transition can only be modest. It can only be focused. It can only be discreet. It can only be with the consent of the host countries. This is a lesson to be learned. It's probably very difficult to do more. Yet it can only happen if there is support of those countries which provide seconded personnel, which provide resources to run the project, and increasingly in a spirit of full cooperation with other international organizations.

I reached my last question, Jim, and we will – (inaudible) – with the room. There is a decentralized, non-institutional model of organization, such as OSCE, viable and durable. You understand what is behind this question; not being an institution, being a collection of loosely coordinated individual units which do their best with a lot of flexibility but which have to sort of invent their own working procedures and the different environments in which they operate, with, of course, the benign oversight of the chairman in office. But the chairman in office is overworked in Vienna in his thankless job of always keeping the organization together and creating consensus. Can this work over time?

Well, the surprising answer is yes, because it does, and because it has worked so far. So pity, of course, the climate-change negotiations, because they work exactly on the same model. As you may remember, recently in Cancun I think the president of the negotiations, the Mexican president, reached a situation where there was a very strong dissenting actor within the room, and she sat down and she said, "Well, I'm very pleased to say that I understand there is only one country which cannot join us. Consensus is entirely fulfilled. The text is agreed. Thank you very much." It worked.

This is a responsibility to be taken at a given moment. The given country, which was also Latino, accepted rather gracefully, and things moved along. But the problem is that, yes, it can work. Probably it's very difficult to do better in the current environment. Certainly for OSCE it would be very difficult to change altogether. And we have to be realistic about international organizations.

One of our key experiences over the last few years is that we are in zero nominal growth. All international organizations are strictly now under fiscal and financial constraint. We are told to cut down, cut down, cut down. We come back and said, "Yes, but you've given us mandate. What are exactly the priorities of what you have to cut down? Can you please discuss with us a strategy about cutting down?" "Yes, you're absolutely right. Now, how much have you cut?" Not an easy situation. Participating states, including the biggest ones, are not always the most easy interlocutors on those issues.

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So I will leave it at that. I put it in questions, the experience of OSCE, because what comes out of putting it in questions is not so much highlighting what it has achieved, but highlighting how lucky it was in achieving what it achieved, in view of the rather exceptional circumstances and frictions to which it was submitted and how possibly this vulnerability and this flexibility are the greatest achievements and the greatest examples for the future.

So this is also a call for your interest and support. It will be well placed, because whatever other forms of international cooperation emerge to address similar problems - democratization, good management of global resources – it will probably be very difficult to have anything more than the type of voluntary templates that have been the hallmark of the OSCE.

Thank you very much, Jim. (Applause.)

MR. COLLINS: Well, Ambassador, thank you very much for the very thoughtful and, I want to say, you know, provocative ideas in some ways. And I appreciate the sense of OSCE as perhaps on the forefront of what many of us will watch as the future rather than the past.

I would like to turn it over to the audience. And so if you'll identify yourself and wait for a microphone, we'll start.

Q: Thank you. I'm Nancy Lubin with JNA Associates, Inc.

And, first, thank you. That was a really good overview and a very candid one, I think, of the strengths and weaknesses of an organization like the OSCE at that strategic level.

And I wanted to bring it down a little bit and ask you how you address some of the challenges at the real tactical level. And in particular, I'm thinking of a report that just came out by the Open Society Institute that looks at OSCE law-enforcement activities in Central Asia as a whole and focuses on Kyrgyzstan. And regardless of whether or not those activities are reaching their immediate goals of law enforcement.

The report concludes that it hasn't been neutral in its impact but has very much been very detrimental to the interests of the human-rights community and have had, in some cases, a devastating impact on human rights. So I see you smiling.

So my question really is, it looks like you've read the report. First, do you think their conclusions are fair? And second, if so, what's the discussion like in the OSCE? And how do you intend to address those concerns?

MR. DE BRICHAMBAUT: Yes, I read the report. And I don't think, honestly, it's a very solid report. There would be a lot of things to say about this report, but basically it is not based on a very thorough and accurate analysis of the situation.

For those who have not read the report, I would say it is a report about the effectiveness of the police support programs which OSCE deploys in Central Asian field offices, and particularly in the one in Kyrgyzstan. We have been over the years dedicating about 1 million Euros a year of our normal budget in beefing up the Kyrgyz police and in improving its capacities, and also in providing it with some – with some hardware, which is always complicated, because we are at the limits of what we can do when we do these things.

Now, let me be very direct. If the head of the mission in Kyrgyzstan, in this complicated situation which I described earlier is in, wants to be able to be side by side with the Kyrgyz authorities on issues of developing ombudsman, free

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media, building up the capacities of the political parties, well, he has to do other things, and he has to do things which are relevant for the broader interest of the government.

And it is our experience that beefing up the police forces and helping them to improve their capabilities has been a key component of our acceptance in all those field operations. It's a fact of life, provided you do it with full respect for human rights and provided your training and support includes that dimension. There is no reason to do it, particularly if there is support by other participating states to do it.

So I'm afraid this particular report has overlooked quite a few aspects, of course. Working with police forces is never simple, but I think the fact that, for instance, in riot control, the Kyrgyzstan authorities have acquired a decent degree of capabilities has prevented some very ugly situations and has saved lives. It was only when the shooting started that those police forces which were protecting the Kyrgyz palace gave in, because they started to be shot at. I will not say who started the shooting; that's another problem. But the option of a non-violent law-and-order framework was given to the Kyrgyz authorities and continues to exist.

I give this example because I am well aware of the ambiguity that it represents. It is not a straightforward example. It does create problems. But it is part of the practical work you have to do. And having working police forces is an element of a working democracy. And having police forces which are exposed to community policing, to human-rights training, is also a key element of building a working democracy over time.

MR. COLLINS: OK. I'll come to you next.

Q: Hi. Ira Straus, Committee on Eastern Europe and Russia in NATO.

I am delighted to see that in the title and the explanation of your talk here, OSCE is lumped in as a part of the Euro-Atlantic group of institutions. Back when CSCE was being institutionalized, people like Brent Scowcroft viewed it as a threat to the Euro-Atlantic institutions or a rival to them. So this is a marked change and a big improvement, since at that time I didn't agree with Scowcroft, but I'm really glad to see the change.

I'm wondering, to what extent do you view yourselves as Euro-Atlantic? How has that change come about? Is it because Medvedev couched his proposals in a Euro-Atlantic language that now you can call yourselves Euro-Atlantic? Or has it been a longer evolution?

And more substantively – the name's important, but substantively, could you distinguish between forms of reinforcing the OSCE order that would also reinforce the Atlantic order, meaning NATO, and those that would detract from NATO? And can you distinguish between forms of strengthening NATO that would reinforce the OSCE order and forms that might detract from it?

MR. DE BRICHAMBAUT: Well, thank you very much.

I'm going to disappoint you. We're not Euro-Atlantic. Since the Astana commemorative declaration, we are Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian. So that provides a little bit of a different perspective. I don't think the – we have to be very careful by not providing, you know, definitions that are enclosed.

Euro-Atlantic institutions are not NATO exclusively. You can be a perfectly respectable Euro-Atlantic institution and not be part of the NATO system or not even having any direct relationship with NATO. The OSCE developed as a broad security organization to which most but not all NATO members participated, at least at the beginning,

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because there were countries which were not yet members of NATO when the OSCE developed. So they were members of the Soviet Union and of the Warsaw Pact altogether.

So the achievement of the '90s has been to broaden the definition of what is Euro-Atlantic. And indeed, it was in the scope of the OSCE before it became in the scope of NATO or the European Union. But by the fact that every single republic that emerged out of the Soviet Union joined OSCE, the OSCE was, from the beginning, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, Euro-Atlantic Asian. And it has explicitly now recognized, in its own definition, that geographic definition.

NATO has a life of its own. It takes care of the interests of its members. It is one – it is a guardian of one of the dimensions of Euro-Atlantic interest. It is not the only guardian of all the dimensions of Euro-Atlantic interest. And I dare say that I do believe that the OSCE does bring something by being Euro-Atlantic Asian to Euro-Atlantic interests.

MR. COLLINS: The gentleman in the back.

Q: Hello. I'm Terry Hopmann from Johns Hopkins-SAIS.

As you know, in 2008, Russian President Medvedev produced a document about new security structures in Europe, which many have taken certainly to be a critique of the diminution, if you like, in his view of OSCE's role in security in the broad region from Vancouver to Vladivostok, in the other terminology.

But since then, both the so-called Corfu process and at Astana, the OSCE certainly has been trying to respond in various ways to see if there aren't some ways in which the security aspect of OSCE might respond to at least some of the issues raised by Russian critics of OSCE, without, on the other hand, creating a new treaty organization, as the Russians have proposed, that would already add to the already numerous European organizations dealing with security.

I wonder if you could just give us your brief assessment of the process, the Corfu process, as it is now developing, and particularly as it developed through the Astana summit.

MR. DE BRICHAMBAUT: Well, I think, to be fair to Russian requests, they did not start with the proposal of the treaty when the treaty was circulated in Athens in December of '09. They started with the speech in June of '08 by President Medvedev in Berlin, and they were the object of continuous consultation thereafter. And it took almost 18 months before they were materialized, if I may say, in a text. But they were politically on the radar screen and on the discussion well before.

And the issue was first discussed in an OSCE context at the Helsinki ministerial in December of 2008. And there was an informal lunch organized by ministers too which was explicitly dedicated to this issue. And Minister Lavrov was first called upon. It's one of those – (inaudible) – informal lunches which lasts for four hours. So, you know, you go well beyond the dessert.

But Minister Lavrov introduced the subject, and then practically every one of the other ministers which were present – that's 50-something – took the floor. And also I don't think there had been any consultation in advance. The message was more or less the same. It said, "Well, your points are interesting. We want to take them into account. They are – if you feel strongly about them, we will not ignore them. But please, we have a framework to discuss this. This framework is here. It's OSCE. Let's not reinvent something new. Let's use it."

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So on the basis of this Helsinki conversation, the incoming Greek chairmanship decided first to have something that had never been done within OSCE, which was an informal ministerial meeting which took place in Corfu, intriguingly, back to back with the NATO-Russia council, which was the first one after the suspension of NATO-Russia councils posterior to the Georgia crisis, and thereafter intensified political consultations, more structure, more focus than the ones that normally take place within the permanent council, which took place in the second half of 2009, and which led to the decisions taken at our ministerial council.

I'm sorry; this sounds like a little bit cooking, but basically it's trying to answer Terry Hopmann's point. The process is ongoing. It was first Corfu. Then it was the process under Kazakh chairmanship of preparing for the summit, the various sessions which took place before the summit decision was taken.

The review conference and the preparations for that took place after the decision to hold the summit was taken. And now we have a (vis to vis ?) series of consultations under Lithuanian chairmanships, which follows the same pattern. It is reinforced consultations with introductions by guest speakers and a perspective of defining deliverables for the forthcoming Vilnius ministerial.

Now, the real question is, does this address the intensity and the content of the points which had been raised by the Russian federation? Can this serve as a political substitute to the request for the negotiations for a new treaty, plus the other texts which have been circulated by Russia in the context of NATO?

It's not for me to answer. This is for the Russian federation itself and its friends to answer. And it can only work if it is a continuous openness and willingness by the partners of Russia to continue to do this dialogue in the context of the OSCE.

So it's an ongoing project, if I may say. If, at a given moment, Russia is dissatisfied with it, well, it might express it. I have noticed that in the recent period the Russian federation, at least in Vienna, has been rather discreet about the issue of the treaty. We have not heard a lot about it lately. So it seems to work. But it can come back. Who knows?

MR. COLLINS: Yes.

Q: Cathy Cosman, U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

I very much appreciated the way you described OSCE as a unique model for this century. And I was wondering whether you could also discuss the role of civil society, which also strikes me as a unique aspect of OSCE and also how, in the past year, some participating states, such as Turkmenistan, have tried to limit that role at various conferences, at both, including the HDIM.

MR. DE BRICHAMBAUT: Well, civil society is a key component of the work of the OSCE from the beginning, clearly. And there are given, if I may say, rules which ensure a direct access and input by civil society, particularly in the human dimension, to the work of the OSCE. The NGO sector is very much invited to participate in the annual human dimension implementation meeting. When we had the review conference in Astana, the civil society was also very present.

And if I can pay tribute in front of Ambassador Idrissov to the Kazakh authorities, they went well beyond what they had to do. They accepted other meetings which were not forecast within the OSCE, some of which took place actually in parallel to the summit itself. And it worked quite smoothly.

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So I don't think at any moment civil society felt itself excluded from the process of the summit, and it was quite a lively exchange of delegates between the deliberations taking place among states and those that took place in parallel among NGOs.

On the other hand, the field offices, for instance, make an intensive use of NGOs as implementing partners, as partners in determining their policies. So they are, if I may say, a great prop for the NGOs in the countries where they intervene; not always a simple or comfortable position, I can assure you.

Now, where we would need more NGOs – I'm going to be very candid about this – I think what the OSCE needs in terms of civil society is two things. First, it needs a network of Helsinki commissions in key countries, not necessarily the congressional Helsinki commission; more the Ludmila Alexeeva type of Helsinki commission, the militants of human rights, democratic transition, and for the rule of law, which exist in certain countries, which are not enough present in other countries. And it's – we certainly need plenty of them west of Vienna.

I can assure you, there are many things west of Vienna which would require the attention and the commitment of dedicated people as part of a Helsinki process. And this, of course, would have to work as a network, because technology has moved along. Media has moved along. Information has moved along. You can have an enormous impact if you push around the right message at the right time.

So I think OSCE is missing this type of network which would complement it and support it. It is too fragmented, too small, and in a way too specialized. The risk is that it is always the same NGOs would show up in the same meetings altogether. So we certainly need that.

And if I may say, thanking again Ambassador Collins for this opportunity, we also need the intellectual network, the network of academics, of think tanks, of not only the security community but the development community, the social-development community, of people who provide us with proposals, with ideas on how to do better, this cross-dimensional security, this long-term democratic transition.

And we need it particularly now if OSCE is going to be a useful model for its Mediterranean partners or for countries which are undergoing a process of difficult transition which may want to rely on OSCE expertise. So this is a time where we need a mobilization, if I may say, of key segments of civil society if the process will remain vital and effective.

MR. COLLINS: Mr. Ambassador, I think your schedule requires that we conclude on that note.

I think it's a fair challenge to the think-tank community and to the civil-society institutions that if they are to be a significant part of the work that an organization and a forum like OSCE does, they're going to have to step up and take the responsibility.

But I want to thank you very much for giving us your perspective, and I want to thank all of you for coming.

We will look forward to staying in touch with OSCE. And we will be very grateful if you will commend our efforts to your successor. And we wish you all the very best. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

(END)