

OSCE: on the Way of New Challenges

The Role

Democracy is not merely a declarative concept. Above all it means rule of law, protection of human rights and a number of other priorities which should ensure a prosperous and dignified community of people. These are also the guiding principles underlying the activities of the OSCE.

It is well-known that the major goal of the OSCE is ensuring the peaceful existence of its 55 member States and their regional security. The organization aims to prevent and address possible conflicts, to manage crises that have already broken out and to support the post-conflict rehabilitation processes on this geographically vast territory.

The existing conflicts differ from each other in nature, form and historical roots. However, they all share an essential commonality since their roots go back to and the consequences lead to the violation of fundamental human rights. Therefore, the vision of establishing a harmonious public environment in the European region directly leads to the necessity of enlarging the role and significance of the organization as a more comprehensive institution ensuring peace and stability in the wider Europe.

Today a number of countries in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, each with their urgent issues of security and stability, are also members of this European organization. It was within the OSCE framework that in 1992 the idea of initiating a conference in Minsk was suggested where the most efficient solution of Artsakh conflict was supposed to be adopted. Within years this institution was renamed into and later internationally recognized as Minsk Group, which is currently co-chaired by the special representatives of the governments of three major world powers – the United States, the Russian Federation and France.

Current Transformations

Some experts note that today OSCE faces a crisis, which stems not so much from the activities of this institution, but rather from the very mechanisms which form the foundations of these activities. In this regard, the principle of consensus adopted by the organization for making important decisions is presented as an outstanding issue. It is argued that very often this guiding principle either slows down or absolutely halts the implementation of resolutions that seem quite comprehensive. In contrast, some others note that it is these very mechanisms and the option of decision-making through a consensus that enhances the role of the OSCE and gives maximum opportunity to all the participating States to defend their own interests.

Actually these discussions were the reason why the OSCE entered the phase of institutional reforms. Obviously, these reforms will succeed only if they aim at the efficiency of the organization, as well as enhancement of its role and reputation. The so-called “crisis” in the OSCE can be overcome if the needs, opinions and concerns of all the participating States are taken into account. In this context Armenian experts anticipate that the OSCE will become even more impartial and fair, respecting the sovereignty of all the participating States.

OSCE-Armenia

Europe and Euro-integration are one of the priorities of the foreign policy of the Republic of Armenia. Being a member of CSCE/OSCE since 1992, Armenia aspires to contribute to the enhancement of the security of Europe through the OSCE concept of comprehensive security, including security in human, military, political and economic dimensions. The OSCE has a positive role in establishing stability and comprehensive security, preventing conflicts, as well as advocating for human rights and democracy in the region.

The OSCE office in Yerevan is also very active. The major directions of its activities are the improvement of legislation, protection of human rights, freedom of media, regional and bilateral cooperation in environmental, economic and military-political issues, development of education and public awareness projects, etc.

Meanwhile the OSCE Yerevan office has initiated a new economic and security cooperation within its mandate and in accordance with the decisions of the OSCE high level bodies. The cooperation with two Armenian law enforcement agencies, the Police and National Security Service of the Republic of Armenia, focuses on elaborating and implementing projects in the security dimension, which target combating terrorism, strengthening cyber security, and other aspects, such as destruction of rocket mélange fuel, and anti trafficking measures.

Active participation in the OSCE Economic Forum on the theme “Transportation in the OSCE area: Secure transportation networks and transport development to enhance regional economic co-operation and stability” in 2006 can play an important role for Armenia. Considering the fact that transportation routes have a unique significance for our country, the Armenian party should actively participate and make constructive suggestions both during the preparatory phase of the forum and the forum itself.

Nowadays, as well as in the past, the activities of the OSCE and Minsk Group co-chairs toward the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are of special importance to the Armenian society. Given the on-going Turkish policy of “pressure through closed borders” and the frequency of belligerent statements in Azerbaijan, it is high time that the European institutions and the OSCE in particular demonstrate a principled approach towards such aggressive behavior. Otherwise, we will have to yield to the necessity of legitimizing a new challenge: implementation of a policy from the position of power.

The paper is elaborated based on the opinions passed by the participants of the conference “Promotion of the OSCE Values, Principles and Commitments as a Basis for Security and Co-operation in the OSCE Area: Concrete Steps towards the European Integration of Armenia” organized by ICHD, which took place on November 21-22, 2005.

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