



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Submission to UN New Agenda for Peace - February 2023**

The question of how to achieve sustainable peace and security is often discussed, and potential answers are persistently debated. Yet as so many of the fundamentals of the international rules-based system that we've built over the last decades are being disregarded or questioned, and in the face of evolving challenges, the initiative to develop a New Agenda for Peace is timely.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) began nearly fifty years ago as a conference. It convened governments that did not see eye-to-eye but saw the merits of coming together to reduce tensions and find issues on which they could co-operate. The resulting Helsinki Final Act outlined key principles to which all participants, from the East and West alike, could agree. We pioneered the concept of comprehensive and co-operative security, recognizing the indelible links between politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions of security. This concept remains the basis of the OSCE's efforts through its Secretariat, field operations and institutions to foster sustainable peace and security.

The OSCE has evolved as the political landscape has developed and has adapted to the changing threats faced by our participating States, which now number 57. We continue to deliver for people – women and men, young and old – as well as governments across our region. We work closely with UN entities and others to develop creative, co-operative solutions aligned with the principles of the UN Charter and the principles and commitments of the OSCE. Yet the challenges of today's environment – including the war being waged against Ukraine, the consequences of which are felt far and wide – demand that we go further. In order to succeed, multilateralism remains crucial, adaptation is essential, and creativity and co-operation will be key.

Many may be questioning the merits of multilateralism given the potential for unilateral action in contravention of previously agreed principles. And it is true that neither the OSCE nor the UN prevented the Russian Federation from invading Ukraine, despite our many efforts. However, this does not invalidate the many successes of multilateral co-operation nor the importance of platforms for dialogue and co-operation. Dialogue may be strained or stalled, but that does not diminish the need for it. Preserving platforms – whether among 57 participating States in the OSCE Permanent Council, or in more tailored formats like the Geneva International Discussions – will be important.

While multilateralism is more often considered in the context of dialogue, the practical aspects are also essential and warrant further investment in the context of a New Agenda for Peace. This is where so much of the UN's work – and indeed so much of the value the OSCE delivers – comes to bear. Every day, we support both co-operation and dialogue

among communities and States to address the challenges that can contribute to instability, tension, and conflict.

When it comes to international cybersecurity, the OSCE is pioneering the development and implementation of 16 regional confidence-building measures to reduce the risks of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies by States.

Through our field missions, we have unique access to and engagement with national authorities at all levels, as well as with civil society. Among other things, this enables us to help implement a whole-of-society approach to addressing transnational threats. Whether countering terrorism and violent extremism, dealing with transnational organized crime, or supporting border security and police-related matters, we provide participating States with tailored capacity-building activities for security sector actors and integrate human rights in all of our policy and programming support. Much of this work is done in partnership with UN entities, notably the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism.

The OSCE plays an important role in the context of arms control, including in relation to small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition stockpile management. The Forum for Security Co-operation, the OSCE decision-making body dealing with politico-military aspects of security, develops documents on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, including those regulating transfers of conventional arms, and establishing principles governing non-proliferation.

The OSCE ranks among the first regional arrangements under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter to address the security implications of climate change. In Central Asia, the South Caucasus and South-Eastern Europe we already facilitate co-operation and joint action among our participating States to tackle climate-related risks. We promote energy security and foster collaboration for the protection of the environment and sustainable management of shared natural resources. Corruption is another formidable security threat that we tackle head-on. Our activities in this domain are designed to help governments enhance the transparency of their services and enable civil society to exercise effective oversight of public administrations.

The OSCE is a leader when it comes to combating trafficking in human beings. Trafficking is not only a criminal justice issue – it intersects with all aspects of society, from human rights and rule of law, to labour rights, migration, and gender. The OSCE is ideally placed to address the complexity of the issue through its broad membership and comprehensive and co-operative approach to security. Our mission is to assist participating States in combating – and ultimately ending - all forms of human trafficking in the OSCE. We strive to resolve persistent threats and emerging challenges in this area through research, policy development, awareness raising, capacity building, technical assistance and raising political will. Our thematic priorities include addressing technology-facilitated trafficking, combating labour exploitation in supply chains, ensuring protection for all victims, discouraging the demand that fosters sexual exploitation, and partnering with the financial sector to address illicit financial flows.

We are also a key actor in promoting gender equality and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. This includes support to women negotiators, peacebuilders, and mediators active in conflict and post-conflict countries through networking, capacity building and mentorship programmes. The OSCE also provides extensive support to participating States in preventing and fighting gender-based violence and in promoting women's economic empowerment, including through digitalisation.

Providing support for human rights and fundamental freedoms is another key area to which the OSCE contributes – especially through the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), and the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM). Particularly in a time when independent views are being restricted and challenged, it is essential that civil society continues to play a crucial role in our societies.

ODIHR works with OSCE countries in areas such as safeguarding fundamental freedoms, working with human rights defenders, improving gender equality, and supporting elections and rule of law, in close cooperation with the UN and regional bodies. While largely recognized, and as increasingly witnessed, upholding human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles remain essential to peace and stability. The gradual erosion of such principles in some countries is key when assessing and forecasting potential security crises.

The RFoM has a leading role as a watchdog for media freedom across the OSCE region and its 57 participating States, providing early warning on violations of freedom of expression and media freedom and promoting full compliance with OSCE principles and commitments regarding freedom of expression and media freedom. The institution and its activities, including the safety of journalists and the fight to end impunity for crimes committed against them, are ingrained within the OSCE's comprehensive security concept, making media freedom a key pillar of security.

Likewise, working at the intersection of security and national minority rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities advances the conflict prevention agenda by supporting the States on designing and implementing inclusive policies and institutions for strengthening social cohesion and integration of diverse societies.

All of this is multilateralism in action, and it will be crucial to continue to build on this kind of co-operation in the context of the New Agenda for Peace. That does not mean, however, that there is no room for improvement. Adaptation is essential, and the OSCE has continuously adapted how we support participating States and how we work with partners. This, too, must continue, and given the challenges before us, creativity and co-operation will be key.

The OSCE is a regional arrangement under the UN Charter and has a wide-ranging partnership with the UN. This year we celebrate 30 years of formal cooperation, and in this time we have established pragmatic ways of working together both at the headquarters level and in the field. These efforts include political dialogue as well as exchange of information and expertise at all levels. We work to support the

implementation of relevant UN resolutions, for instance UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. On the operational front, we have established joint programmatic activities with UN entities including in the context of our field missions; we have contributed to disarmament, conventional arms control and non-proliferation; and we have supported reconciliation in South Eastern Europe. We have joined the UN Compact for Women, Peace and Security and have made commitments in the framework of the General Equality Action Coalitions. This collaboration is immensely valuable for both our organizations and, most importantly, for the people and institutions we serve.

Looking ahead, we would welcome more dialogue and consultation – including on an ad hoc basis – between the UN and regional organizations. This would enhance joint situational awareness and facilitate discussions and planning on geographical and thematic areas relevant to our mandates at earlier stages in potential crises and conflicts. It would also enable regional organizations to begin building support for more robust multilateral approaches to dealing with emerging and existing challenges.

We have already seen the utility of creating a coordination mechanism for crisis situations, to take advantage not only of logistical synergies, but also to engage in the operational planning necessary to prepare and carry out complementary, gender-responsive and disability-inclusive activities. For example, good co-operation between the OSCE's previous missions in Ukraine and the UN humanitarian aid agencies cluster provided for the exchange of real-time information on the needs of the civilian population that helped both organizations to respond more effectively.

As part of a New Agenda for Peace, the UN could consider how to further advance this type of mutually beneficial cooperation in the field with regional actors under the framework of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. Building on the experiences across the OSCE region, where both the UN and OSCE have been deployed, our future partnership could further harness our comparative advantages. The OSCE has 30+ years of experience in deploying field operations/missions, including in crisis and post-conflict situations; this experience can inform future international efforts.

As the international community looks to adapt its work in support of peace and security, our organizations are facing many of the same challenges, particularly regarding political support and provision of sufficient financial resources. Implementation of a New Agenda will require political and financial investment by countries around the world, as well as greater focus on synergies across organizations. To make this work, we will also need to build on partnerships with civil society and the private sector.

In general, to improve how the international community addresses existing and emerging threats to security and works to prevent or manage conflict, the New Agenda should consider the following:

- How to more effectively address the conditions that can contribute to instability and conflict, ranging from disinformation and various forms of discrimination to corruption and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons

2023 UN New Agenda for Peace – contribution from the OSCE

- How to leverage the benefits of technology to analyse and synthesize information, to contribute to early warning and more targeted response to emerging threats, while at the same time increasing the resilience against harmful activities emanating from cyberspace, including cybercrime
- How to foster greater inclusivity and promote leadership – of women, youth, minorities – as a driver of sustainable peace and prosperity, and to ensure that they are protected, given that these groups are often the most threatened by violence and conflict
- How to reinforce elements of preventive diplomacy and crisis response across the peace and security pillar, including joint efforts with regional organizations

Of course we cannot speak of a New Agenda for Peace without the full, equal and meaningful participation of women. The OSCE is a stalwart promoter of gender equality and women's rights in all dimensions of comprehensive security.

Complementing the UN's global mandate, the OSCE offers a regional framework for peace and security - one that is comprehensive, inclusive, principled and adaptable. The OSCE can support States to rebuild trust and reconcile differences, with the goal of achieving sustainable security for all.

If the New Agenda is to guide the international community's path in the coming decades, we must engage in this work – across States and organizations – in a spirit of co-operation. In the face of violence and uncertainty, we should not abandon our principles or the tools we have built to support them but use our tools in new and innovative ways. We should recognize that there is more work yet to do – and recommit to doing it together.