Focus on the Future
A Contribution to Discussions on a new OSCE

edited by Rob Zaagman

Introduction
What is the OSCE supposed to do and how much should it do? Is there a role at all for the OSCE to play alongside the existing multilateral organisations in Europe and, if so, which role should that be? A clear perspective on what will and will not be aimed at is essential. It will give enhanced focus on the multidimensional activities in which the OSCE engages, it will provide it with a more easily recognisable place of its own in the system of interlocking institutions, and it will enable our citizens to better understand what the Helsinki process is all about. On the basis of such an understanding, states can proceed with the actual enhancement of the OSCE and of its use. However, we should only be ambitious within a realistically defined framework. High-flying blueprints for the future of the OSCE will quickly become out of touch with reality and, worse still, give rise to expectations which cannot be fulfilled.

In this report, we will argue that focusing on conflict prevention sets an objective which is ambitious enough in itself but very well suited to the particular 'comparative advantages' which the OSCE possesses. Such a focus will not require a wholesale institutional restructuring of the OSCE or a desperate establishment of new bodies, nor incisive changes in decision-making procedures. Institutionally there is already much in place which only needs to be made to work better. What is requested are concrete, directly applicable measures as a pragmatic follow-up to or elaboration of what already exists. The institutional flexibility for which the OSCE is rightly famous will allow it to adapt as needed to future changing circumstances. That flexibility should be maintained and the dangers of bureaucratization should be kept in mind when discussing the enhancement of the OSCE.

Complementarity and Cooperation: The OSCE in its International Environment
While the OSCE is certainly not a miracle worker or panacea, it has many valuable characteristics which give it the potential to play an important or even unique role in Europe. In defining the OSCE's mission, one will have to take into account what international organisations like NATO, the Council of Europe and the European Union are already doing, what their individual aims are and which competencies and means they have at their disposal. One should look at

1. This report is a condensed and updated version of a Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC) report of 15 December 1994, which can be obtained from the NHC. The full report was written on the basis of discussions in an informal working group consisting of the following people: Arie Bloed, Pieter van Dijk, Cees Homan, Wilco de Jonge, Herman de Lange, Hans van Santen, Rob Siekmann, Joop Veen and Rob Zaagman.
relations between international organisations in terms of aims to be achieved and strengths to be capitalised upon.

NATO provides its relatively small group of members with intense political-military consultations, an integrated military structure and close cooperation between armed forces, and a wide range of political and hard military options in the case of conflict or impending conflict. The European Union is an integrated body of economically successful and strong states that brings together most of Europe's longer-established democracies. Its economic and financial resources are incomparably greater than those of the OSCE. The Council of Europe is the organisation which embodies Western political-ethical and cultural values. It is essentially through legal means and connected programmes that the Council is trying to enhance the condition of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in its member states.

If we speak about the place of the OSCE alongside these organisations and its relationship with them, we should keep several things in mind. One buzz-word in this regard is 'complementarity'; there is no need and there are no resources to duplicate the efforts of other international bodies. If concurrent activities do take place, they should reinforce each other.

The other buzz-word, then, is 'interlocking institutions': If the international organisations work together, each will be able to contribute its particular 'comparative advantages' to the combination. The question obviously is how to make them interlock instead of 'interblock'. Regular consultations, both at the political and the working level, are necessary, and a commitment to transparency with regard to activities and structures. If need be, the Chairman-in-Office and Secretary-General should be requested to reach agreement with relevant international organisations in this regard.

The relationship between the OSCE and other international bodies could of course vary and develop over time; it is important to avoid any kind of rigidity in this regard. For example, the OSCE could act as a mandating or legitimising institution, e.g. on peacekeeping with regard to NATO, WEU or the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

**Fundamental Characteristics of the OSCE**

If we want to define the OSCE's new role in Europe, we need to proceed from its strong points and we should not saddle the organisation with a burden it is not equipped to carry. Furthermore, we should realise that there are many characteristics of the OSCE which have both a strong and a weak side, which are at the same time both a disadvantage and an advantage. Repairing a weakness should not result in impairing the connected strength. States should capitalise on the strong sides of the OSCE while compensating for the weak ones.