The Potential for Cooperation by the OSCE and Non-Governmental Actors on Conflict Management

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Introduction
As violent conflicts have emerged across Europe and the former Soviet Union, the search for non-violent means to resolve or manage these conflicts has become ever more important. Such non-violent conflict management activities, which may also be described as preventive diplomacy, include efforts to obtain early warning of conflict and interventions that are intended to prevent, mitigate, transform or resolve conflicts.

Many observers believe that conflict management is an important growth area for the OSCE. As stated by a member of the European Commission’s staff: ‘The main role of the OSCE after Budapest will be conflict prevention, crisis management and peacekeeping, most probably in conjunction with other organizations’. 1 Furthermore, it is widely held that conflict management presents a large, unexplored potential for OSCE cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The value of such cooperation was recognized by the OSCE in the decisions reached at the 1994 Review Conference in Budapest: ‘The participating States and CSCE institutions will provide opportunities for increased involvement of NGOs in CSCE activities as foreseen in Chapter IV of the Helsinki Document 1992. They will search for ways in which the CSCE can best make use of the work and information provided by NGOs’. 2

A growing corps of non-governmental actors, both individuals and organizations, is active in a wide range of non-violent conflict management activities across the OSCE region. The personnel involved are often highly trained in the theory and practice of conflict management, and come to it from a range of disciplines, including law, the social sciences, and diplomacy. A variety of non-governmental organizations are ready to provide expert consultation to groups in conflict and to international organizations such as the OSCE. Some of these NGOs engage in ‘Track Two’ efforts that seek to address the root causes of conflict, to train people in conflict resolution skills, and to promote dialogue and negotiations between both official and unofficial members of communities in conflict.

This article focuses on the potential for cooperation between this corps of professional, non-governmental actors and the OSCE. The article is not intended to address issues of OSCE-NGO cooperation outside the conflict management arena, nor are arguments about OSCE-NGO cooperation on conflict

management necessarily applicable to OSCE-NGO cooperation in other endeavours. The authors' focus derives, in part, from the experience of running a conflict management project in the Balkans. Other related experience of the authors, in Europe and elsewhere, has included efforts to promote the more systematic application of conflict management by NGOs and governments. One author (Paula Gutlove) has been a public member of the United States' delegation to two CSCE conferences. The first of these events was a seminar addressing 'Early Warning and Preventive Diplomacy', held by the ODIHR in Warsaw in January 1994. The second was the CSCE Review Conference in Budapest, in November 1994. At both events the author addressed issues of conflict management and the potential for cooperation between the OSCE and NGOs in this field.

OSCE interest in the work of NGOs on conflict management, and in the potential for cooperation with NGOs active in this field, was apparent at the ODIHR seminar in Warsaw and at Budapest. Interest was further demonstrated at two seminars organized by the Institute for Resource and Security Studies (IRSS) in cooperation with the OSCE Secretariat. The first of these was a seminar held in Stadt Schaining, Austria, in September 1994, to explore the potential for OSCE-NGO cooperation on conflict management. The second was a seminar at the Hofburg in Vienna in June 1995, to explore the opportunities for exchanging information on conflict management in the OSCE region.

The OSCE and Conflict Management
The OSCE is devoting progressively greater attention to conflict management activities. This trend has continued for several years and was reflected, for example, in the creation of the CSCE Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) at the Paris Summit of 1990. The trend was reinforced at the Budapest Summit of 1994, whose Declaration noted that: 'The CSCE will be a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention and crisis management in the region'. Practical evidence of this trend includes the opening of the OSCE Court on Conciliation and Arbitration in Geneva in May 1995.

Development of the OSCE's conflict management plans and capabilities occurs within the broader context of a search for a new security architecture for Europe. That search is plagued by the residue of East-West confrontation, which is particularly visible in the controversy surrounding the eastward expansion of NATO. Thus, because the OSCE has a proven record of success as a Europe-wide forum, governments will inevitably turn to it as a key instrument of European security. In illustration, when German Foreign Minister,