OSCE CHRONICLE

OSCE involvement in Albania

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1. OSCE activities in Albania
Although the multilateral military force already has left Albania several months ago, it is quite visible in the streets of Tirana and in the rest of the country that the international community has not left the country alone. A considerable number of cars with the name plates of OSCE, EU and WEU and other organizations can be seen driving around. At the moment a major international effort is on its way in order to assist the country to restore stability after the total collapse of law and order in the spring of last year which was triggered off as a result of the bankruptcy of the notorious pyramid funds.

Although the situation in the country has stabilized to a great extent and a new government has been installed after the June elections of last year, the situation is certainly not yet perfect. Although a considerable number of (light) weapons again have been collected and safely deposited, a large number of such weapons are still floating around and are often in the hands of the maffia. And the fact that the police and other law enforcement officials are doing their work again, does not detract from the fact that the country is still exposed to a great deal of violence. There are still considerable numbers of killings and attacks against properties of the government or political parties. As the economic and social situation in the country is not noticeably improving under the new government, the potential for new unrest clearly exists.

The efforts by the international community are, therefore, greatly needed in order to help the country. A major task in this area is being undertaken by the OSCE which had its own 'Presence' in the country since the summer of last year. The OSCE mission is located in Tirana with four field offices in towns like Shkodra and Gjirokaster. In January it got a new head of mission in the person of the Dutch Ambassador Daan Everts.

The former Austrian Chancellor Dr. Franz Vranitzky has played a very important role in bringing about a peaceful solution to the crisis in Albania. As the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office since early March last year, he has successfully negotiated with the various parties in Albania which resulted in the elections in June and a peaceful transfer of power to the opposition. On 30 and 31 October, Dr. Vranitzky paid a farewell visit to Albania with which he formally ended his role as the OSCE trouble shooter.

The main task is now for the OSCE Presence under its new leader. The
OSCE plays an important coordinating role in relation to the efforts by various international organizations to assist Albania. The OSCE’s main task is to provide advice and assistance in democratization, the media and human rights, and to act ‘as a flexible coordinating framework for international assistance to Albania in concert with the Albanian Government’. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is in the process of developing various projects for concrete assistance to various groups within Albania, such as the police, the judiciary, the law school and legislative activities, in particular in supporting the drafting of a new constitution (see also below section 6).

2. Transdniestria problem remains unsolved
The problems around Transdniestria, the Russian-occupied zone in Moldova, have not yet been solved. In November the Transdniester leader Igor Smirnov rejected recommendations from Russian, Ukrainian, and OSCE mediators on Transdniestria’s future political status as an autonomous part of Moldova. Smirnov spoke after meeting Moldovan President Petru Lucinschi in Chisinau. Russia’s CIS affairs minister, Anatoly Adamishin, who was recently tasked by President Boris Yeltsin to coordinate the Russian policy on this conflict, attended part of the talks. Smirnov also rebuffed Lucinschi’s proposal that Transdniestrian residents be allowed to vote in Moldova’s forthcoming parliamentary elections. This implies that the problem is certainly not yet solved and will require further OSCE mediation.

3. Conflict in and around Nagorno-Karabakh
The ongoing conflict in and around the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh has not reached a solution either. Although OSCE has already been trying since 1992 to find a peaceful solution to the dispute, the parties are not yet prepared to accept the proposals tabled by the international mediators. The problems do not only exist in the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but also surface in the relations between Armenia and the leadership of the Armenian enclave. The Karabakh President Arkady Gukasian, for instance, in November told a visiting group of journalists in Stepanakert that ‘serious differences’ have emerged between Karabakh and Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrossian regarding the resolution of the conflict with Azerbaijan. Gukasian alleged that Ter-Petrossian’s readiness to enter into a compromise about the maximum autonomy of Karabakh within Azerbaijan is self-contradictory because it deprives Karabakh of the right to self-defence. Only the status of being a subject of international law would ensure that right, Gukasian stressed. He also targeted Ter-Petrossian’s implicit acceptance of the ‘step-by-step’ approach, proposed by OSCE mediators and also favoured by Azerbaijan. That approach ultimately leads to war, Gukasian warned. He also called for changes to the negotiating format in order to reduce the ‘excessive prerogatives’ of the OSCE mediating group’s three co-chairmen — the U.S.,