



United States Mission to the OSCE

The OSCE – Building on the Momentum with our Asian Partners

As delivered by Thomas A. Wuchte, Department of State
to Session III of the OSCE-Thailand Conference, Bangkok
April 26, 2006

Introduction

Excellencies, Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a great honor and pleasure for us to participate in this conference organized by the OSCE and the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand. Today, I would like to share some thoughts on how the Track II presentation by Mr. Kamphausen on an Asian Academic Network underscores how some aspects of the OSCE experience might be relevant to the challenge Asia faces from nontraditional as well as traditional security threats. I would also like to follow up on the suggestions put forward at the last two Partner Conferences in Japan and Korea by several delegations. Today's session provided the opportunity to look ahead and provides Food-for-Thought on ways to support our Asian Partners with the OSCE's Outreach efforts.

At the core of OSCE is its integrated approach to Security – democracy, human rights, and economic development are linked to security. Such an approach brought many freedoms forward during a period of transition in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The OSCE provides a flexible model that can be adapted to reflect concerns and circumstances of different regions. Many of the threats we face in the 21st century are transnational and trans-regional in nature - terrorism, proliferation of WMD, epidemics, trafficking, etc. The OSCE as an institution may be European based but the security dialogue has expanded to reflect new global challenges - cooperation among organizations will likely grow to meet shifting threats that have no firm base in Europe or anywhere. The U.S. delegation clearly saw this outreach focus at the PrepCom three months ago in New York for the July UN Small Arms/Light Weapons Review Conference.

East Asia is beginning to reach out to Europe more on a range of issues - economic, political, security, etc. The development of the Asia-Europe Ministerial Meeting (ASEM) is an example of this trend. Europe also sees increasing opportunities for political interaction with East Asia. The OSCE maintains a special relationship with five Asian states as Partners: Afghanistan, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia and Thailand. The Partners for Cooperation in Asia began fostering a flexible dialogue with the OSCE in the early 1990s. Japan's partnership started in 1992, Korea's in 1994, and Thailand's in 2000. Afghanistan was granted partnership status in 2003, and Mongolia in 2004. This is a positive trend we should support where appropriate.

The OSCE issued a report in November 2004 after lengthy discussions with its Partners for Cooperation that provides an extensive set of ideas, and the Ministerial in December 2004 asked that we collectively remain seized of this matter. Given the multifaceted security challenges facing Northeast Asia and Middle East, the OSCE, with its breadth of confidence-building tools across all three dimensions, is potentially a valuable resource and partner for

those and other regions. Partners and participating States have agreed that there are elements of the OSCE experience that have value for practical application in their regions. Asia and the Middle East, as well as North Africa, could benefit from intensified exchange with the OSCE to learn about the OSCE's efforts to counter nontraditional security threats through dialogue on democracy, economic and human rights initiatives. Conversely, the OSCE participating States can learn from the experiences of our Asian Partners.

During the 2005 Korea Conference participants correctly recognized that Northeast Asia (and some other regions) currently lack an effective vehicle to formalize a more intensified exchange with the OSCE. Conferences such as this one do not occur often enough to perform this role and do not encompass all the relevant regional players. Nonetheless, there may be an opportunity for collaboration between the respective efforts through the ideas put forward by Mr. Kamphausen.

The OSCE-Japan Conference in 2004 was a breakthrough in this regard. If you recall, that meeting coincided with the ARF Seminar on Preventive Diplomacy, co-hosted by two OSCE Partners, Japan and Thailand. Many ARF Participants attended the OSCE-Japan Conference as observers and the OSCE had the opportunity to present the summary of the conference to the ARF meeting, which immediately followed the OSCE gathering. Members of the Track II communities that follow the OSCE and the ARF were also present at both meetings to enliven the interchange between the OSCE and the ARF. In addition, I should also mention here that we are very encouraged by ARF participants' renewed interest in strengthening linkages between Track I and Track II processes and between the ARF and other regional and international security organizations. In particular, we appreciate Thailand's efforts to advance this discussion in the ARF by drafting a concept paper around which participants' views can coalesce.

The United States suggested at the 2005 Korea Conference as one starting point the recommendation to establish a "Research Institute Network" from The Partners for Cooperation Report on Outreach Implementation, as prepared by Ambassador Harkonen of Finland. An Asia Academic network could hold a series of Track II conferences, affiliated in some way with the ideas drawn from the OSCE to be determined by the sponsoring think-tanks, allowing an exchange that can act as a catalyst for enhanced cooperative security efforts in the Asia-Pacific and its sub-regions, especially Northeast Asia. This network would complement, not replace, other long-established Track II mechanisms such as NEACD and CSCAP. This brings us to today and the final session. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on the ideas put forward by the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR).

Conclusion

In closing, I observe that, today, the last three OSCE Asia Conferences leave us poised to deepen security cooperation between OSCE pS's and the OSCE's Asian partners. This presentation was intended to bring the ideas of the previous conferences with the OSCE into focus and to highlight a particular mechanism (Track II Dialogue) whereby the OSCE experience may be helpful to the region as it deals with both nontraditional as well as traditional threats.

Perhaps the most promising way to advance this effort is to deal first with the threats that are most susceptible to cooperative solutions through Track II dialogue. In dealing with the newly prominent security concerns of the twenty-first century, we can learn and act together,

with regularized exchanges and visits, as security in the age of globalization is truly indivisible. Once cooperation in this area is under way, would it not be easier for the OSCE and other regions to cooperate more closely on addressing the persisting threats they face?