


The institutionalisation of the CSCE

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The Charter of Paris for a New Europe, dated 21 November 1990, provided for the development of the CSCE structures with a view to promoting ‘a new quality of political dialogue and cooperation’. The chapter on ‘New structures and institutions of the CSCE Process’ stressed the importance of intensifying consultations at all levels and established a system of regular political consultations. In order to provide administrative support for these consultations, it also established a Secretariat in Prague. Finally, it set up two specialist institutions (a Conflict Prevention Centre, in Vienna, and an Office for Free Elections, in Warsaw) and provided for the creation of a CSCE parliamentary structure (the CSCE Parliamentary Assembly).

Regular political consultations would take place at three levels:

- at the level of Heads of State or Government, meeting at a **Summit** on the occasion of the follow-up meetings which would, in principle, be held every two years thereafter;
- at the level of Ministers for Foreign Affairs meeting regularly and at least once a year as a **Council**;
- at the level of the **Committee of Senior Officials**, in principle meeting at the offices of the Secretariat in Prague.

The Council’s task was to consider issues relevant to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and to take appropriate decisions; its meetings provided the central forum for political consultations as part of the CSCE process. The task of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) was to review current issues and to take appropriate decisions, including decisions in the form of recommendations to the Council. It was to prepare the meetings of the Council and implement its decisions.

In addition, the Council was to consider the finalisation of provisions for convening meetings of the Committee of Senior Officials in emergency situations. These were adopted in June 1991 at the first meeting, in Berlin, of the Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs and, because of this, came to be known as the ‘Berlin mechanism’.

The Supplementary Document adopted at the same time as the Charter of Paris detailed the procedures and organisational arrangements relating to certain provisions enshrined in the Charter of Paris. Procedures to implement CSCE commitments were provided as part of the remit of the two new specialist institutions: a mechanism to implement confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) through the Conflict Prevention Centre based in Vienna, which included a network for rapid communication between the participating States and the Centre, and facilities for observation and exchange of information on electoral procedures through the Office for Free Elections based in Warsaw.

The Charter of Paris was the act by which the CSCE was recast as an institutionalised entity. Even so, the new structures and their resources proved insufficient to manage the changes taking place in post-Communist Europe. That is why, at its second meeting on 30–31 January 1992, the CSCE Council adopted the *Prague Document on Further Development of CSCE Institutions and Structures*, by which several decisions were taken: extension of the role of the CSO, which would meet at least every three months and would be responsible for overview, management and coordination of the CSCE between Council meetings, a decision to give additional functions to the Office for Free Elections, which would thereafter be known as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), institution of the ‘consensus minus one’ decision-making procedure (where necessary in the absence of the consent of the State concerned) in cases of clear, gross and persistent violations of relevant CSCE commitments, periodic meetings of the CSO as an Economic Forum and enhancement of the functions and working methods of the CPC, in particular of its Consultative Committee, which was to serve as a forum on security issues with politico-military implications. Furthermore, the Council asked the Helsinki Follow-up Meeting to study additional arrangements for the implementation of its decisions and to consider how the CSCE could cooperate with other international organisations, non-governmental organisations and non-participating States.

At the first Summit of the institutionalised CSCE, held in July 1992 during the Helsinki Follow-up Meeting, the Heads of State or Government of the participating States approved a programme to increase resources for

concerted action, in particular in the field of early warning, conflict prevention and crisis management. Indeed, the Helsinki decisions served to make the CSCE 'more operational and effective'. They further developed structures to ensure political management of crises (the system of regular political consultations) and established new specialist institutions: the High Commissioner on National Minorities, as an instrument of conflict prevention, and the Forum for Security Cooperation, as a framework for negotiations on arms control, disarmament, confidence- and security-building measures and security cooperation, with a strengthened Conflict Prevention Centre. In addition, they set guidelines for relations with international organisations, non-participating States and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Following the Helsinki Summit, the political consultation bodies were redefined as follows:

- the **summit** would take place every two years during the 'follow-up meetings', henceforth known as '**review conferences**';
- the **Council** constituted the central decision-making and governing body of the CSCE;
- the **CSO**, between the meetings of the CSCE Council, would be responsible for overview, management and coordination and would act on behalf of the Council in taking appropriate decisions. The CSO would also meet as the Economic Forum;
- the **Chairman-in-Office** would be responsible, on behalf of the Council/CSO, for the coordination of and consultation on current CSCE business.

But the institutionalisation of the CSCE, as it moved towards conversion into a true international organisation, was still not complete. It developed further by the refinement of its permanent structures in Vienna, in the administrative field (Secretariat) and the decision-making field (Permanent Committee). At its third and fourth meetings, the Council adopted several decisions on these lines. In December 1992, in Stockholm, it established the post of Secretary General in Vienna, combining under his direction the Prague Secretariat and the CPC. In addition, it introduced regular meetings of accredited Ambassadors in Vienna within what became known as the 'CSO Vienna Group'. In December 1993, in Rome, it supplemented its Stockholm decisions: on the one hand, by instituting a CSCE **Secretariat General** in Vienna, which combined the Prague 'Office' and the CPC; and, on the other hand, by institutionalising the weekly meetings of the CSO Vienna Group, thereby bringing the **Permanent Committee** into being. Furthermore, it wound up the CPC Consultative Committee and transferred its functions to the Permanent Committee and the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC).

Finally, the Budapest Review Conference in December 1994 converted the CSCE into the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) with effect from 1 January 1995 and renamed its political consultation bodies as follows:

- the Council of the CSCE became the **Ministerial Council**. As the decision-making and governing body of the CSCE, it would, as a rule, meet once a year towards the end of the term of office of every chairman at the level of Foreign Ministers;
- the CSO became the **Senior Council**. It would meet in Prague at least twice a year at the level of political directors or at a corresponding level to discuss and determine the broad political and budgetary guidelines. It would also meet before the Ministerial Council Meeting and be convened as the Economic Forum;
- the Permanent Committee became the **Permanent Council**. It would meet in Vienna as the regular body for political consultation and decision-making and would be composed of the permanent representatives of the participating States.

Overall responsibility for executive action would lie with the **Chairman-in-Office** (CIO). The CIO would maintain close contacts and an active dialogue with the Parliamentary Assembly (PA), draw the recommendations of the PA to the attention of the Permanent Council and inform the PA on the activities of the CSCE. In the exercise of his yearly mandate, the CIO would be assisted by personal representatives and the Troika.

In support of the Chairman-in-Office, the **Secretary General** would be more actively involved in all aspects of the management of the CSCE and would participate in Troika ministerial meetings.