

## The institutions of the OSCE

**Source:** CVCE. European Navigator. Raquel Valls.

**Copyright:** (c) CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

**URL:** [http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the\\_institutions\\_of\\_the\\_osce-en-ff5a138d-ac89-4606-a2e4-dde486c7c72b.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_institutions_of_the_osce-en-ff5a138d-ac89-4606-a2e4-dde486c7c72b.html)

**Last updated:** 08/07/2016



## The institutions of the OSCE

### The bodies for political consultation

Decisions are taken within the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) by the bodies for political consultation which are responsible for representing the governments of the participating States of the OSCE at all levels: at the level of Heads of State or Government (Summit), at the level of Ministers for Foreign Affairs (Ministerial Council), at the level of Political Directors of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, i.e. civil servants from the national capitals (Senior Council) and at the level of ambassadors accredited to the Austrian capital (Permanent Council). The hierarchical relationship between these bodies, based on their composition, is also reflected in their role: the Permanent Council is the preparatory body for the Senior Council, which is, in turn, the preparatory body for the Ministerial Council. The Summit is the general policy-making forum.

### The Summit

During the Cold War period, the CSCE met at summit level only once, during the third stage of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, in Helsinki from 30 July to 1 August 1975 in order to adopt, in a formal sitting, the 'Final Act' of the Conference. The Summit was thus the crowning achievement of the work of the only conference, strictly speaking, held before the fall of the Berlin Wall. A distinction should be drawn between conferences and the less formal 'follow-up meetings' which culminate in the adoption of a 'final document'.

Following the collapse of Communism, the first Summit was held in Paris from 19 to 21 November 1990 in order to adopt the Charter of Paris for a new Europe. Subsequently, Summits have rounded off the work done by 'Review Conferences' with a political declaration adopted at the highest level. These preliminary Review Conferences adopt political decisions concerning the development of the OSCE's structures and activities. The biannual frequency of the Summits, provided for by the Helsinki Review Conference in 1992, was called into question at the Budapest Review Conference in 1994. Since then, Summits have been less frequent. After Summits in Helsinki (1992), Budapest (1994) and Lisbon (1996), the most recent Summit was held in Istanbul in 1999. Following the creation of the Permanent Council and the introduction of annual evaluation exercises within the specialist institutions, Review Conferences also lost their initial importance.

### The Ministerial Council

Conceived by the Charter of Paris as the central forum for political consultations within the CSCE process, the Council was defined by the 1992 Helsinki Decisions as the central decision-making and governing body of the CSCE. In 1994, the Budapest Decisions confirmed its role as the governing and decision-making body. Originally called the 'CSCE Council', it was renamed the 'Ministerial Council' in 1994. Under the authority of a **Chairman-in-Office** with increased powers, it meets once each year at the end of the term of office of the Chairman. Acting on behalf of the Council, the Chairman-in-Office is responsible for coordination and consultations connected with the routine business of the organisation. Following the example of the Council of the European Union, he is assisted by his predecessor and his successor, who form the **Troika** with him. He is also assisted by ad hoc steering groups and personal representatives.

### The Senior Council

The 'Committee of Senior Officials' (CSO) (the original name of the Senior Council) was set up by the Charter of Paris to prepare the work of the Council and implement its decisions. It reviews current issues and takes appropriate decisions, including decisions in the form of recommendations to the Council.

Since June 1991, the CSO has been able to meet in emergency situations. The 'Berlin mechanism' is initiated at the request of a requesting State and with the agreement of 12 other participating States. An emergency meeting is then held within a period of two or three days.

The CSO's functions were extended at the second meeting of the Council held in Prague in January 1992. Between meetings of the Council, the CSO became the body responsible for overview, management and coordination and would act as the Council's agent in the taking of decisions, including decisions concerning the human dimension and crisis management and conflict prevention. In exercising its functions, it could delegate tasks to other CSCE institutions or to open-ended ad hoc groups of participating States with a precise mandate. In order to increase its effectiveness, the CSO would meet at least every three months. It would also meet periodically in Prague as the Economic Forum. The facilities of the CSCE communications network would be made available to the Chairman-in-Office of the Committee of Senior Officials for the forwarding of urgent messages connected with the work of the Committee.

The July 1992 Helsinki Decisions further developed the CSO's role in the political management of crises and in the human dimension and economic affairs. Acting on behalf of the Council, the CSO would assume overall CSCE responsibility for managing a crisis with a view to its resolution. It could, *inter alia*, decide to set up a framework for a negotiated settlement or to dispatch rapporteurs or a fact-finding mission. The CSO could also initiate or promote the exercise of good offices, mediation or conciliation or initiate a peace-keeping operation. In the context of crisis management, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, acting in the field of conflict prevention, would act under the aegis of the CSO. As regards the human dimension, its main institution, the ODIHR, would act under the general guidance of the CSO. In the field of economic cooperation, the Helsinki Decisions laid down the mandate, organisation and functions of the Economic Forum, which would meet once each year as a specialist formation of the CSO.

The December 1994 Budapest Decisions changed the name of the CSO to 'Senior Council' and provided that it was responsible for discussing and determining broad political and budgetary guidelines. It would meet in Prague at least twice a year. An additional meeting would be held once each year before the Ministerial Council Meeting, and it would also be convened once a year as the Economic Forum.

### **The Permanent Council**

In December 1992, in order to increase the efficiency of the CSO, the Stockholm Council authorised representatives of the participating States to meet regularly in Vienna in periods between sessions of the CSO. This decision created a quasi-permanent informal body, the 'CSO Vienna Group', which was given institutional status one year later by the Rome Council as the 'Permanent Committee'. In December 1993, the Rome Council also stated that the Permanent Committee would be responsible for the day-to-day operational tasks of the CSCE under the chairmanship of the Chairman-in-Office, that it would conduct comprehensive and regular consultations and, when the CSO was not in session, take decisions on all issues pertinent to the CSCE. The Permanent Committee would report to the CSO and undertake preliminary discussion of items to be entered on the agenda of the CSO. In addition, following the dissolution of the CPC Consultative Committee, the Permanent Committee would hold meetings of the participating States which could be convened under the mechanism on unusual military activities.

The 1994 Budapest Decisions changed its name to the 'Permanent Council'. In addition to its regular responsibility for consultations and political decisions, it could also be convened in emergencies.

### **The specialist institutions**

#### **The Forum for Security Cooperation**

The Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) is the main institution for the politico-military dimension of the OSCE and has autonomous decision-making powers in the fields of CSBMs and disarmament.

The decision to set up a CSCE Forum for Security Cooperation was taken following the disappearance, at the end of the Cold War, of the dichotomy between 34-party negotiations on **confidence and security-building measures** (CSBMs) being conducted within the CSCE and the 22-party negotiations taking place between the members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact on **conventional disarmament** (MBFR = mutual and balanced force reduction; then CFE = reduction of conventional armed forces in Europe). In November 1990, following the

adoption of the Vienna Document concerning the negotiations on CSBMs and the signing of the CFE Treaty, the Charter of Paris for a new Europe announced that the CSBM and CFE negotiations would be concluded, on the basis of their respective mandates, no later than the Helsinki CSCE follow-up meeting scheduled for 1992. It also announced the opening of discussions and consultations among the 34 CSCE participating States so that new negotiations on disarmament and confidence- and security-building measures open to all participating States might be opened by 1992.

Accordingly, at the Helsinki follow-up meeting in July 1992, following the adoption in March 1992 of the 1992 Vienna Document concerning the negotiations on CSBMs and upon the adoption of the Concluding Act on the negotiations on personnel strength of conventional armed forces in Europe (CFE-1A), the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) was established by Chapter V of the Helsinki Decisions — originally ‘with a strengthened Conflict Prevention Centre’ — with a view to ensuring that efforts towards arms control, disarmament and confidence- and security-building, security cooperation and conflict prevention were coherent and complementary.

Under the Helsinki Decisions, the Forum was based on the progress made in the Vienna Documents concerning the negotiations on CSBMs, the Treaty on Open Skies and the CFE Treaty in order to develop three basic functions: opening new negotiations on arms control, disarmament and confidence- and security-building, enhancing regular consultation, dialogue and cooperation on matters related to security, and reducing the risk of conflict. The Helsinki Decisions are supplemented by an annex setting out an Immediate Action Programme for the FSC.

When it was set up, the Forum consisted of a Special Committee, whose remit covered negotiations, dialogue and cooperation, and the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) Consultative Committee, which was responsible for ‘the existing and future tasks of the CPC’. In reality, because of the lack of resources available to the CPC and of a specific definition of the CPC’s tasks, the FSC would never exercise its third function. In order to ensure consistency, the participating States on the Special Committee and the Consultative Committee would, in principle, be represented by the same delegation. The two Committees, which were able to create subsidiary bodies, would use the same premises in Vienna and be assisted by an Executive Secretary nominated by the host country.

Following the Council’s December 1993 decision to integrate the CPC into the Secretariat General, the CPC Consultative Committee was dissolved, and its powers and responsibilities were transferred to the Permanent Committee (as regards the holding of meetings which might be convened under the mechanism on unusual military activities) and to the FSC. The FSC then took on the tasks for which the CPC had been responsible since it had been set up by the Charter of Paris in the field of politico-military security: implementation of CSBMs, preparation of seminars on military doctrine, convening of annual implementation assessment meetings and provision of the forum for discussion and clarification of information exchanged under agreed CSBMs.

The December 1994 Budapest Decisions defined, in Chapter V, the additional tasks of the Forum. As well as continuing its work in accordance with its mandate, the FSC would now pay increased attention to improving the implementation of existing CSCE commitments relating to CSBMs and would also place special emphasis on tackling regional security problems (including crises). The FSC was also given the task of developing a framework for arms control. Lastly, while retaining its autonomy and decision-making capacity, the FSC would be better integrated into CSCE political, conflict-prevention and crisis-management activities. For that purpose, provision was made for practical cooperation between the FSC and the Permanent Council in the consideration of current issues affecting military security.

In December 1996, the FSC adopted two decisions defining new policies for its future work (‘A framework for arms control’ and ‘Development of the agenda of the Forum for Security Cooperation’). The participating States agreed to consider the introduction of greater efficiency into the working methods of the FSC and ways of achieving greater consistency between the FSC and the Permanent Council in complementary fields of activity. The FSC would report to the Ministerial Council on progress made and on which specific items the FSC had decided to enter on its agenda.

## The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

The main institution dealing with the human dimension of the OSCE, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), was created when further functions were conferred on the Office for Free Elections (OFE) in 1992.

Set up in Warsaw in 1991 on the basis of the November 1990 Charter of Paris, the OFE was given the role of facilitating contacts and exchange of information on elections in the participating States. To that end, it was made responsible for a number of tasks: gathering information on the dates, procedures and official results in national elections held in the participating States, producing election observation reports, providing such reports and information upon request, facilitating contacts between governments, parliaments and relevant private-sector organisations, and organising and hosting seminars or other meetings relating to election procedures and democratic institutions.

Following the adoption by the Council, in January 1992, of the *Prague document on further development of CSCE institutions and structures*, the OFE became the ODIHR in order to extend practical cooperation among participating States in the human dimension. Under the general guidance of the CSO, the Warsaw Office then took on a number of further tasks, including organising a meeting every two years to review the implementation of human dimension commitments, serving as an institutional framework for sharing and exchanging information on available technical assistance, expertise, and national and international programmes aimed at assisting the new democracies in their institution-building, facilitating cooperation in training and education in disciplines relevant to democratic institutions, and organising meetings and seminars among all participating States on subjects related to the building and revitalisation of democratic institutions.

In order to avoid duplication of effort, particularly as regards the exchange of information and the establishment of contacts for institution-building in the new democracies, the ODIHR had to work closely with the Council of Europe in particular.

The ODIHR was also designated as the CSCE institution responsible for tasks connected with expert and rapporteur missions carried out under the October 1991 Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE (Moscow mechanism).

In Chapter VI on the human dimension, the July 1992 Helsinki Decisions provided for a greater role for the ODIHR. In addition to the tasks that it already carried out, other tasks were given to it, in particular to serve as a venue for meetings and as a clearing-house for information for all instruments relating to the human dimension: bilateral meetings and requests for information under the Vienna mechanism, expert and rapporteur missions under the Moscow mechanism, meetings on implementation and specialist seminars. In addition, it would perform the tasks laid down in the 'Programme of coordinated support for recently admitted participating States' and provide, where appropriate, facilities to the High Commissioner on National Minorities. Lastly, the ODIHR would be involved in conflict prevention, contributing, among other things, to the activation of the early-warning system.

The December 1993 Rome Council once again extended the ODIHR's functions and operations. The tasks conferred on it included the establishment of an expanded database of experts in the human dimension, comprehensive election monitoring, strengthened cooperation with relevant international organisations, collation of information provided by NGOs and participating States, and dissemination of general information on the human dimension and international humanitarian law. In addition, in keeping with the further emphasis given to human dimension issues in the mandates of CSCE missions as well as in the follow-up of mission reports, the ODIHR was given an enhanced role in the preparation of those missions, *inter alia*, by providing information and advice to missions in accordance with its expertise.

The December 1994 Budapest Decisions provided that, in consultation with the Chairman-in-Office, the ODIHR would have increased involvement in the work of the Senior Council and of the Permanent Council and that its cooperation with international organisations and institutions active in human dimension areas

would be furthered, in particular with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migrations (IOM). The ODIHR took on several functions: it would act as a clearing-house for the exchange of information from governments, journalists and NGOs on media issues in the region, it would be consulted on a CSCE mission's mandate before adoption and would contribute to the follow-up of mission reports as determined by the Permanent Council, it would play an enhanced role in election monitoring, before, during and after elections, assessing the conditions required for the free and independent functioning of the media, developing a structure for coordination between the various organisations monitoring elections, devising a handbook for election monitors and setting up a rolling calendar for forthcoming elections, and it would increase the effectiveness of both large-scale and regional human dimension seminars.

Under the Budapest Decisions, the participating States appointed within the ODIHR a **contact point for Roma and Sinti (Gypsies) issues**. In these matters, the ODIHR would act as a clearing-house for the exchange of information and facilitate contacts between participating States, CSCE institutions, international organisations and institutions, and NGOs. Reinforced by decisions taken at the Oslo Ministerial Council in December 1998, the role of the ODIHR contact point was clarified in the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area, adopted by the Maastricht Ministerial Council in December 2003.

After 2000, the ODIHR was given additional tasks in the fight against the trade in human beings, the fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, the promotion of gender equality and the fight against terrorism and organised crime.

### **The High Commissioner on National Minorities**

The High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) was established by the July 1992 Helsinki Decisions in order to strengthen 'CSCE capacities in the field of early warning'. Thus, even though the protection of the rights of those belonging to national minorities is one of the areas covered by the human dimension, the HCNM was conceived as an instrument of preventive diplomacy and crisis management where the security of the CSCE region was threatened by ethnic conflicts breaking out in eastern Europe and in Yugoslavia in particular.

Chapter II of the Helsinki Decisions gives a detailed description of the HCNM's mandate, profile, tasks and facilities.

Appointed by the Council by consensus upon the recommendation of the CSO for a period of three years, renewable for one further term, and under the aegis of the CSO, the HCNM is an 'instrument of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage'. As such, he would provide 'early warning' and, as appropriate, 'early action' at the earliest possible stage in regard to tensions involving national minority issues which had not yet developed beyond an early warning stage but had the potential to develop into a conflict within the CSCE area, affecting peace, stability or relations between participating States, requiring the attention of and action by the Council or the CSO.

The involvement of the HCNM, who must be an eminent international personality with long-standing relevant experience and who must act independently of all parties directly involved in the tensions, would require a request and a specific mandate from the CSO. In the light of fears on the part of certain participating States over the creation of a body to protect the interests of national minorities, the HCNM would not consider violations of CSCE commitments with regard to an individual person belonging to a national minority or national minority issues in situations involving organised acts of terrorism. In considering a situation, the High Commissioner would take full account of the availability of democratic means and international instruments to respond to it and of their utilisation by the parties involved. The High Commissioner would enjoy use of the facilities of the ODIHR in Warsaw.

As far as his early warning functions were concerned, he would collect information, assess the nature of the tensions and their consequences, pay a visit to any participating State, communicate in person with parties

directly concerned, discuss the issues with the parties and, where appropriate, promote dialogue, confidence and cooperation between them. Should he undertake such a mission, he could request the assistance of experts (at the most three). The experts would be selected by the High Commissioner with the assistance of the ODIHR from the list established at the ODIHR.

If, on the basis of exchanges of communications and contacts with relevant parties, the High Commissioner should conclude that there is a *prima facie* risk of potential conflict, he may issue an early warning. The Chairman-in-Office communicates this promptly to the CSO and enters this early warning on the agenda for the next meeting of the CSO. If a State believes that such an early warning merits immediate consultation, it may initiate the emergency procedure under the Berlin mechanism.

As regards the adoption of early action, the HCNM may recommend that he be authorised to enter into further contact and closer consultations with the parties concerned with a view to possible solutions, on the basis of a mandate to be determined by the CSO.

In the exercise of his mandate, the HCNM observes the rule of confidentiality. Prior to departure for a participating State, the High Commissioner consults the Chairman-in-Office, who consults, in confidence, the State concerned. After a visit, the HCNM provides strictly confidential reports to the Chairman-in-Office on the findings and progress of the High Commissioner's involvement in a particular issue. Once his involvement in a particular issue has finished, the High Commissioner reports to the Chairman-in-Office on the findings, results and conclusions. Within a period of one month, the Chairman-in-Office will consult the participating State, in confidence, on the findings, results and conclusions and may consult more widely. Thereafter, the report, together with possible comments, will be forwarded to the CSO.

After 2000, additional tasks were conferred on the HCNM in respect of the fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism and the promotion of gender equality. Under the 2003 Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area in particular, the HCNM will continue to follow the development of anti-discrimination legislation and provide advice to the participating States in this respect, disseminate guidelines for policy-makers on the use of State broadcast media in multicultural communities, aimed, *inter alia*, at encouraging support for minority broadcasters, encourage participating States to comply with their commitments to provide free and equal access to public education to all members of society and provide guidance on educational models, curriculum content and the teaching of, or in, the mother tongue. In addition, the Sofia Ministerial Council in December 2004 stipulated that the HCNM would address specific issues relating to the participation in public and private life of women belonging to national minorities and, in policies and projects developed by his office, take steps necessary to counter the double discrimination suffered by these women as part of his conflict prevention mandate.

### **The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media**

On 5 November 1997, the Permanent Council decided to appoint in Vienna, under its aegis, an OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in order to consolidate the implementation of the OSCE principles and commitments regarding freedom of expression and of the media. Having responsibility for advocating and promoting full compliance with these principles and commitments in close coordination with the Chairman-in-Office, the appointed person would assist the participating States in their continuing commitment to the furthering of free, independent and pluralistic media, follow media developments in all participating States and issue an early warning in the event of a violation of the principle of freedom of expression, in particular by reporting serious problems caused by obstruction of media activities and unfavourable working conditions for journalists.

Appointed by the Ministerial Council by consensus, upon the recommendation of the Chairman-in-Office and after consultation with the participating States, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media serves for a period of three years, renewable for one further term of three years. Like the HCNM, he must be an eminent international personality with long-standing relevant experience from whom an impartial performance of the role would be expected.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media must closely cooperate with the participating States, the Permanent Council, the ODIHR, the HCNM and, where appropriate, other OSCE bodies, as well as with national and international media associations. On the basis of regular contacts, he must cooperate with relevant international organisations, including the United Nations and its specialised agencies and the Council of Europe, with a view to enhancing coordination and avoiding duplication of effort.

In the event of an allegation of serious non-compliance with principles and commitments, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media seeks direct contacts with the participating State and with other parties concerned, assesses the facts, assists the participating State and contributes to the resolution of the issue. He will keep the Chairman-in-Office informed about his activities and report to the Permanent Council on their outcome and on his observations and recommendations. The mandate states that the Representative does not exercise a juridical function, nor can his involvement in any way prejudice national or international legal proceedings concerning alleged human rights violations.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media must collect and receive information on the situation of the media from all *bona fide* sources. He must, in particular, draw on information and assessments provided by the ODIHR and support the ODIHR in assessing conditions for the functioning of free, independent and pluralistic media before, during and after elections. He forwards requests, suggestions and comments to the Permanent Council and recommends further action, where appropriate.

After 2000, additional tasks were conferred on the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in respect of the fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, the fight against terrorism and organised crime, and the promotion of gender equality.

For example, the Bucharest Ministerial Council held in December 2001 laid down that the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media would consider developing projects aimed at supporting tolerance towards people of other convictions and beliefs through the use of the media, that he would promote measures aimed at preventing and fighting aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism in the media, that he would continue to encourage pluralistic debate and increased media attention to promoting tolerance of ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural diversity and would, in this context, promote broad public access to media as well as monitor hate speech. In addition, with regard to supporting law enforcement and fighting organised crime, he would cooperate in supporting, on request, the drafting of legislation on the prevention of the abuse of information technology for terrorist purposes, ensuring that such laws were consistent with commitments regarding freedom of expression and the free flow of information.

The Sofia Ministerial Council held in December 2004 provided that the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media would continue to play an active role in promoting both freedom of expression and access to the Internet and would continue to observe relevant developments in all the participating States. This would include issuing an early warning when laws or other measures prohibiting speech motivated by racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic or other related prejudice were enforced in a discriminatory or selective manner for political purposes which could lead to the expression of alternative opinions and views being impeded. He would be alert to allegations of serious intolerance towards women and of incitement to gender discrimination in or by the media in participating States and would inform the participating States of such cases in his regular reports.

## **Other bodies linked to the OSCE**

### **The Parliamentary Assembly**

Set up by a resolution of the delegations of the Parliaments of the States participating in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), meeting in Madrid on 2 and 3 April 1991, the Parliamentary Assembly is not a statutory body of the OSCE. It is a separate body created in order to involve parliamentarians from the OSCE participating States in the pan-European security process. Unlike the governmental OSCE bodies, it does not adhere to the principle of equality of States and is not based on consensus. Each national parliament is represented in proportion to the population of the State in question. In



addition, its declarations, recommendations and proposals to the OSCE bodies are generally adopted by majority during the annual plenary session. Through the Chairman-in-Office, it maintains a dialogue with the Ministerial Council. It is based in Copenhagen, and its secretariat is connected to the OSCE Communications Network.

Its 317 parliamentarians meet twice a year, in July, for no more than five days, for the **annual session** and in February, for no more than three days, for the **winter meeting**. Annual sessions include meetings of the standing committee, general committees and plenary sittings, whilst the winter meetings include only sessions of the standing committee and general committees: the Committee on Political Affairs and Security, the Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and the Environment, and the Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions.

The Assembly also organises various seminars and conferences throughout the year.

### **The Court of Conciliation and Arbitration**

The Court of Conciliation and Arbitration was established in 1995 to settle, by means of conciliation and, where necessary, arbitration, disputes arising between OSCE participating States which are party to the *Convention on conciliation and arbitration within the CSCE*, signed on 15 December 1992. The Court is based in Geneva. It is not a permanent court, however. Where a dispute arises between States party to the Convention, they may request the formation of a conciliation commission or an arbitral tribunal on an ad hoc basis.

### **The Secretariat**

Under the direction of the Secretary General, the Secretariat provides the necessary administrative and operational support to the OSCE. It is based in Vienna and has an office in Prague which assists with documentation and information functions. The Secretariat's role includes, in addition to personnel management and administrative and financial matters, the fostering of contacts with international and non-governmental organisations, coordination of the OSCE's economic and environmental activities through the **Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities** and the organisation of politico-military activities and support for the OSCE's field operations through the **Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC)**. The Secretariat also has a Strategic Police Matters Unit, an Anti-Trafficking Assistance Unit and an Action against Terrorism Unit.

The post of **Secretary General** was established by the December 1992 Stockholm Council. Appointed by the Ministerial Council by consensus on the recommendation of the Senior Council and Chairman-in-Office for a period of three years, renewable for one further term of two years, he acts as the representative of the Chairman-in-Office and supports him in all activities aimed at the attainment of the goals of the OSCE. The Secretary General's tasks also include the management of OSCE structures and operations, working closely with the Chairman-in-Office in the preparation and conduct of OSCE meetings and ensuring the implementation of the decisions of the OSCE.

The **Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC)** has been one of the Secretariat's main departments since the Secretariat was created in 1993. However, it was originally set up as an autonomous specialist institution. Its organisation and its functions subsequently changed as a result of the creation of the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC).

Created by the Charter of Paris in November 1990 to assist the Council in reducing the risk of conflict, the CPC had a Consultative Committee when it was created in March 1991, composed in principle of Heads of Delegation to the negotiations on confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs), which was responsible to the Council, and a Secretariat, which was responsible to the Consultative Committee. According to its initial mandate, the CPC would give support to the implementation of CSBMs such as the mechanism for consultation and cooperation as regards unusual military activities, the annual exchange of military information, the communications network, annual implementation assessment meetings and cooperation as

regards hazardous incidents of a military nature. Initially, therefore, the CPC played a military role which could be extended to the political field.

The *Prague Document on further development of CSCE institutions and structures*, dated January 1992, enhanced the functions and working methods of the CPC and, in particular, of its Consultative Committee as a forum in the politico-military security field, although this was ‘without prejudice to later decisions on the structure of a new security/arms control forum and the relationship it may have to the CPC’.

The creation of the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) by the July 1992 Helsinki Decisions marked a further development in the FSC to the detriment of its management function in relation to the CSBM regime. Temporarily integrated into the CSBM regime, the CPC Consultative Committee performed this function until its dissolution in December 1993, when the Secretariat General was created and the CPC was integrated into it. As a department of the Secretariat, its role was then defined by the CSO in November 1993. The CPC is now responsible for overall support for the OSCE’s tasks in the fields of early warning, conflict prevention and crisis management, operational support for field missions, the database and the communications system. The CPC’s Director also provides assistance in the administration of the mechanism for the peaceful settlement of disputes and CSBMs and offers support for the activities of the FSC.

The adoption of the Charter for European Security in November 1999 contributed to the development of the CPC’s operational capabilities, in particular as regards rapid deployment, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation efforts. Accordingly, so as to facilitate preparation and planning, an Operation Centre (now the Operations Planning Unit) was created within the CPC, with powers and responsibilities relating to all kinds of OSCE operations, with a small core staff which could be expanded rapidly. Its role is to plan and deploy field operations, including those involving REACT (Rapid Expert Assistance and Cooperation Teams) resources. It liaises with other international organisations and institutions, where appropriate, in accordance with the Platform for Cooperative Security.