
Chairmanship: Ireland

**REPORT BY
THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE CONTACT GROUP WITH THE OSCE
MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION TO THE
NINETEENTH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

As Chair of the Mediterranean Contact Group in 2012, Ukraine focused on fostering an open and interactive dialogue with the Mediterranean Partners and on following a demand-driven approach to responding to the interests and priorities of the Mediterranean Partners, in line with the Ministerial Council Decision on Partners for Co-operation adopted at Vilnius in 2011. Important steps have been taken by the Chair to strengthen the results-oriented co-operation between the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners.

After a number of informal discussions in January and February in close co-operation with the OSCE Secretariat, a list of potential projects and topics of potential co-operation with the OSCE Mediterranean Partners was developed and circulated among the participating States and the Partners. The list reflects the OSCE areas of expertise and interests initially expressed by the Partners. To date, it serves as a working tool and is intended to help Mediterranean Partners and participating States to identify concrete activities and to prioritize their implementation. The project ideas listed can be further refined and tailored in accordance with the indications of Mediterranean Partners and potential donors. Notably, the projects can be undertaken by individual Partner States based on their needs and priorities, but may also entail the involvement of a number of interested States, thus promoting regional co-operation.

During the year, the Mediterranean Contact Group in the OSCE remained the key format for political dialogue with full participation of the Partners and the participating States. The rolling schedule of the Contact Group meetings, as well as the agenda of the 2012 Mediterranean Conference, were elaborated in close consultation with the participating States and the Partner countries.

In the course of the year, six meetings of the Mediterranean Contact Group were held, as well as a joint meeting with the Asian Partners for Co-operation. The Mediterranean Partners actively contributed to the meetings of the Mediterranean Contact Group with regular presentations on the situation and developments in their respective countries and region. These presentations contributed to enhancing reciprocal knowledge and allowed for mutually enriching exchanges of information and views on security issues of shared concern. The meetings covered topics in the three dimensions of OSCE security, with presentations by experts from OSCE executive structures, international organizations and academia.

In the first meeting of the Mediterranean Contact Group, held on 17 February 2012, the OSCE Irish Chairmanship presented its priorities and planned activities, emphasizing the valuable experience possessed by the OSCE in many areas which could be of relevance for Partner countries, and noting that the OSCE toolbox was already fully available to the Partners for Co-operation. The OSCE Secretary General stressed the importance of further strengthening the relationship between the OSCE and its Partners as a two-way street and of pursuing practical and results-oriented co-operation, as pledged in the Vilnius MC Decision on the Partners. Participants shared their views on how to best implement the provisions of the Vilnius Ministerial Council Decision on Partners for Co-operation and discussed the prospects for the 2012 OSCE Mediterranean Conference. The Ambassador of Tunisia, H.E. Samir Koubaa, made a presentation on the ongoing developments and challenges faced by his country in the aftermath of Arab Spring and the subsequent democratic transition.

During the second meeting of the Contact Group, on 16 March 2012, the Irish Chairmanship provided information about the tentative interest of Libya's Deputy Foreign Minister in exploring further the possibility of Libya becoming an OSCE Partner for Co-operation. The meeting focused on the first dimension and featured a presentation by Ambassador Adam Kobieracki, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, followed by a thematic discussion on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, with interventions by Dr. Alexandre Lambert from the School for International Training, Geneva, and Dr. Heinz Vetschera BGen, Academic Lecturer, Peace Support Operations Training Centre, Sarajevo. The Moroccan Ambassador, H.E. Ali El Mhamdi, made a presentation on the developments in Morocco. In addition, a representative of the Secretariat presented the list of potential projects and topics of potential co-operation with the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, which had originated from the OSCE Secretary General's consultations with Mediterranean Partners on areas for possible stronger practical engagement and had been distributed prior to the meeting under the symbol SEC.GAL/51/12.

The third meeting of the Contact Group was held on 18 May 2012, and focused on the second dimension, with a presentation by Ambassador Makram M. Queisi of Jordan on the organization of the first Workshop on Environment and Security Issues in the Southern Mediterranean Region. A discussion on the topic of sustainable energy and water management followed, with interventions by the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Mr. Goran Svilanovic. Mr. Nikolai Denisov, ENVSEC Regional Desk Officer for Eastern Europe, of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe, made a presentation on "The Dniester Project: Transboundary water cooperation for Eastern Europe", and Dr. Nebojsa Nakicenovic, Deputy Director of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), intervened to present the results of the "Global Energy Assessment". The OSCE Secretariat provided an update on the progress and feedback received regarding the list of potential projects and topics for potential co-operation with the OSCE Mediterranean Partners.

During the fourth meeting, on 20 July 2012, Ambassador of Israel, H.E. Aviv Shir-On, gave a presentation on the current situation in Israel and its region. Also, issues related to the third dimension were discussed. Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, delivered a presentation on "Ongoing Opportunities for Engagement and Co-operation, Engagement in 2012 and Future Activities", reiterating the ODIHR's readiness to offer its support and to continue the dialogue with all the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. Presentations were also made

by Mr. Damian Gjijnuri, Co-chair of the Special Committee for Electoral Reform of the Albanian Parliament, and Mr. Richard Lappin, ODIHR Election Adviser, to provide some information on the recent OSCE/ODIHR support to the Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform in Albania and the follow-up to the ODIHR election-related recommendations. Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, Special Representative of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Vienna, informed the participants of the outcomes of the 21st Annual Session of the OSCE PA and the Mediterranean Forum, held on 5 and 6 July in Monaco. The participants also exchanged views on the modalities of the upcoming 2012 OSCE Mediterranean Conference.

At the fifth meeting, held on 8 October 2012, Ambassador Mohammed Benhocine made a country presentation on developments in Algeria. Also, the participants exchanged views on the preparations for the 2012 OSCE Mediterranean Conference, to take place in Rome on 30 and 31 October. The group was also briefed by representatives of the OSCE Anti-Terrorism Unit about the upcoming events planned by the Transnational Threats Department/Action against Terrorism Unit (TNT/ATU) of potential interest to the Mediterranean Partners.

The last meeting of the year took place on 27 November and provided an opportunity for the 2012 OSCE Irish Chairmanship to brief participants on the preparations for the upcoming Ministerial Council meeting. Ambassador Makram M. Queisi of Jordan made a presentation on economic and social developments in his country. The agenda of the meeting focused on the outcomes of the 2012 OSCE Mediterranean Conference. The participants exchanged views on the follow-up to the deliberations held in Rome and were briefed by Mr. Reinhard Uhrig, Deputy Head of the OSCE Action against Terrorism Unit, and Ms. Elena Rigacci Hay, Policy Coordination Officer, Terrorism Prevention Branch, UNODC Division of Treaty Affairs, on relevant upcoming activities. In particular, representatives of the Action against Terrorism Unit of the TNT Department and UNODC, in their joint presentation, provided an update regarding the workshop being prepared on enhancing counter-terrorism co-operation in the Mediterranean Basin, while implementing the universal legal instruments against terrorism. The representative of Gender Section also discussed with the Partners the potential follow-up to the interest in the topic of women's empowerment that had emerged during the meeting. In conclusion, the participants welcomed the incoming Swiss Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group.

The annual joint meeting of the Asian and Mediterranean Contact Groups was held on 8 June and focused on the topic "Regional Organizations as Contributors to Comprehensive Security", with interventions by three speakers, Dr. Wolfgang Zellner, of the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy, University of Hamburg; Mr. Ettore Greco, Director of the Institute of International Affairs, Rome; and Ambassador Marcel Pesko, Director of the Office of the OSCE Secretary General. This meeting provided the opportunity for an update on recent developments and the progress achieved in making the OSCE Partnership more interactive and action-oriented, in implementation of the Vilnius Ministerial Council Decision on the Partners.

Consistent efforts were made by the Ukrainian Chair of the Mediterranean Contact Group, directed at successful preparation of the annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference, which took place in Rome on 30 and 31 October 2012. Reflecting upon the priorities expressed by Mediterranean Partners in preparation for the event, the agenda of the meeting was focused on one main topic, and one entire day of discussions was dedicated to

exchanging views and information on the theme “Economic Co-operation with Mediterranean Partners in the Democratic Transition Processes and Political Reforms”. Particular attention was devoted to issues related to economic and social challenges in the Mediterranean Partner countries. The participants discussed how to enhance the economies of Mediterranean Partner countries by applying relevant OSCE best practices, and how to promote dialogue and to develop co-operation on sustainable energy, including renewable energy sources. High-level officials from participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, along with representatives of international organizations and NGOs, contributed to the event, thus enhancing the interactive and productive character of the discussions. The participants also exchanged views and explored avenues for potential co-operation on the topics in which the OSCE had experience, in connection with addressing transnational threats to security and enhancing the participation of women in political and public life.

The distinctive feature of the 2012 Mediterranean Conference was an open and interactive exchange of views, which contributed to better understanding of the nature of the assistance that can be provided by the OSCE to support the national reform agendas in the Partner States. The discussions testified to the participating States’ and Partners’ expectation that more focused and strategic approaches would be adopted, and that the partnership would gradually be made more operational through implementation of concrete projects, particularly in the area of economic and social development. Participants from the OSCE participating States and countries of the Mediterranean region introduced many ideas that could enhance co-operation and an exchange of best practices. Specific proposals of particular interest related to setting up a Track II focal point that would promote establishment of an academic network with the Mediterranean region; to holding a seminar on combating human trafficking, in view of the implications of this crime for the Mediterranean Partners; and to conducting an expert workshop on sustainable energy to share good practices and seek possible avenues for the way forward.

An important task for all the participating States and the Partners should be to establish an effective connection between the discussions which took place at the Conference and the activities pursued in the course of work as its follow-up in 2013. In its capacity as holder of the OSCE Chairmanship in 2013, Ukraine will continue to promote action-oriented activities, also in relation to the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

The 2012 Ukrainian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group expresses its sincere gratitude to all the participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation for their commitment and co-operation in the framework of the OSCE Partnership as a platform for open dialogue and exchange of views, as well as in promotion of a results-oriented and demand-driven co-operation. Ukraine will continue to support and promote an effective and productive Mediterranean Partnership, in terms of both political dialogue and practical co-operation.