

Editorial: OSCE Summit In Astana

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In our first issue of 2009 we already predicted that 2010 would be a fascinating year. We have not been disappointed. Of course, the fact that for the first time one of the Central Asian participating States would assume the Chairmanship-in-Office, and that after some lengthy discussion, already warranted such a prediction. But at that moment in time it could not be foreseen that in 2010 the first OSCE Summit of this century would take place. Neither was it to be expected that Central Asia would become the focus of even more of the OSCE's attention due to the events in Kyrgyzstan. As so often in the past, it can be said that the OSCE never ceases to surprise us — which is of course good for our magazine and keeps diplomats occupied. In this issue we have attempted to devote special attention to these two important issues mentioned here.

A generation of diplomats dealing with the OSCE have in the meantime never experienced a Summit, which therefore has perhaps become a more 'magical' event than was ever intended. A Summit which takes place every two — or three — years tends to become, to a certain extent, a routine matter. It might be argued that it is better to have less frequent Summits — but after a decade without such an event expectations inevitably rise. To recall how the idea of regular Summits originated and how it was put into practice, this issue of Security and Human Rights pays some attention to this first decade following the Paris Summit. And we see how optimism — perhaps not well founded — gave way to a more realistic view.


A realistic view of the state of affairs in the OSCE area is perhaps now more than ever necessary. A discussion on the security on our continent will not gain much by high-sounding phrases or generalities, which obscure the real issues at stake. The Corfu process has the merit that it focussed attention on these issues and, whatever its outcome, the forthcoming Summit will at least put some pressure on the work done in this respect. The differences in perspective will probably not disappear, but a better understanding thereof might give some hope for the future. The OSCE has up until now always been able to come up with some solutions, as long as the political will existed.

All this, of course, places a special burden on the shoulders of the Chairman-in-Office. For Kazakhstan, of course, there is much at stake. Having succeeded in convincing the participating States to have a Summit in Astana, it is now also closely linked to a successful outcome. In past years, it has always been stressed that having no Summit was better than holding one ending in failure. This holds true now as much as ever and no Chairman-in-Office will look forward to no or a meagre result. The way Kazakhstan has performed its task as Chairman-in-Office up until now in any case gives confidence that it will make strenuous efforts to prevent such an undesirable — to them and to the OSCE — outcome.

Every Chairman-in-Office always has one or more issues emerging which it did not expect when taking up this burden. For Kazakhstan this has inter alia happened in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan. In the meantime, the situation has ameliorated in so far as the elections in this country have taken place, also according to OSCE observers, in such a positive manner that the international press hardly paid attention to them; which is the best evidence that things are going well — or at least not too badly. But Kyrgyzstan still remains the focus of attention, at least for this magazine, as can be witnessed also in this issue.

The year 2010 has indeed been a fascinating year for the OSCE. Whatever the results of the Summit, we have witnessed interesting developments, which will certainly be remembered for years to come — at least until the next Summit.

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