

FINNISH FOREIGN POLICY PAPERS

04

Jaakko Iloniemi

FINNISH FOREIGN POLICY PAPERS 04, December 2015

NOT JUST ANOTHER TEA PARTY The lasting value of the OSCE

Afghanistan Akrotiri Albania Algeria American Samoa Andorra Angola Anguilla Antarctica Antigua and Barbuda Argentina Armenia Aruba Ashmore and Cartier Islands Australia Austria Azerbaijan Bahamas Bahrain Bangladesh Barbados Bassas da India Belarus Belgium Belize Benin Bermuda Bhutan Bolivia Bosnia and Herzegovina Botswana Bouvet Island Brazil British Indian Ocean Territory British Virgin Islands Brunei Bulgaria Burkina Faso Burma Burundi Cambodia Cameroon Canada Cape Verde Cayman Islands Central African Republic Chad Chile China Christmas Island Clipperton Island Cocos Islands Colombia Comoros Congo, Democratic Republic Congo Cook Islands Coral Sea Islands Costa Rica Cote d'Ivoire Croatia Cuba Cyprus Czech Republic Denmark Dhekelia Djibouti Dominica Dominican Republic Ecuador Egypt El Salvador Equatorial Guinea Eritrea Estonia Ethiopia Europa Island Falkland Islands Faroe Islands Fiji Finland France French Guiana French Polynesia French Southern and Antarctic Lands Gabon Gambia Gaza Strip Georgia Germany Ghana Gibraltar Glorioso Islands Greece Greenland Grenada Guadeloupe Guam Guatemala Guernsey Guinea Guinea-Bissau Guyana Haiti Heard Island and McDonald Islands Holy See Honduras Hong Kong Hungary Iceland India Indonesia Iran Iraq Ireland Isle of Man Israel Italy Jamaica Jan Mayen Japan Jersey Jordan Juan de Nova Island Kazakhstan Kenya Kiribati Korea, North Korea, South Korea, South Kuwait Kyrgyzstan Laos Latvia Lebanon Lesotho Liberia Libya Liechtenstein Lithuania Luxembourg Macau Macedonia Madagascar Malawi Malaysia Maldives Mali Malta Marshall Islands Martinique Mauritania Mauritius Mayotte Mexico Micronesia Moldova Monaco Mongolia Montserrat Morocco Mozambique Namibia Nauru Navassa Island Nepal Netherlands Netherlands Antilles New Caledonia New Zealand Nicaragua Niger Nigeria Niue Norfolk Island Northern Mariana Islands Norway Oman Pakistan Palau Panama Papua New Guinea Paracel Islands Paraguay Peru Philippines Pitcairn Islands Poland Portugal Puerto Rico Qatar Reunion Romania Russia Rwanda Saint Helena Saint Kitts and Nevis Saint Lucia Saint Pierre and Miquelon Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Samoa San Marino Sao Tome and Principe Saudi Arabia Senegal Serbia and Montenegro Seychelles Sierra Leone Singapore Slovakia Slovenia Solomon Islands Somalia South Africa South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands Spain Spratly Islands Sri Lanka Sudan Sudan, South Suriname Svalbard Swaziland Sweden Switzerland Syria Taiwan Tajikistan Tanzania Thailand Timor-Leste Togo Tokelau Tonga Trinidad and Tobago Tromelin Island Tunisia Turkey Turkmenistan Turks and Caicos Islands Tuvalu Uganda Ukraine United Arab Emirates United Kingdom United States Uruguay Uzbekistan Vanuatu Venezuela Vietnam Virgin Islands Wake Island Wallis and Futuna West Bank Western Sahara Yemen Zambia Zimbabwe Afghanistan Akrotiri Albania Algeria American Samoa Andorra Angola Anguilla Antarctica Antigua and Barbuda Argentina Armenia Aruba Ashmore and Cartier Islands Australia Austria Azerbaijan Bahamas Bahrain Bangladesh Barbados Bassas da India Belarus Belgium Belize Benin Bermuda Bhutan Bolivia Bosnia and Herzegovina Botswana Bouvet Island Brazil British Indian Ocean Territory British Virgin Islands Brunei Bulgaria Burkina Faso Burma Burundi Cambodia Cameroon Canada Cape Verde Cayman Islands Central African Republic Chad Chile China Christmas Island Clipperton Island Cocos Islands Colombia Comoros Congo, Democratic Republic Congo Cook Islands Coral Sea Islands Costa Rica Cote d'Ivoire Croatia Cuba Cyprus Czech Republic Denmark Dhekelia Djibouti Dominica Dominican Republic Ecuador Egypt El Salvador Equatorial Guinea Eritrea Estonia Ethiopia Europa Island Falkland Islands Faroe Islands Fiji Finland France French Guiana French Polynesia French Southern and Antarctic Lands Gabon Gambia Gaza Strip Georgia Germany Ghana Gibraltar Glorioso Islands Greece Greenland Grenada Guadeloupe Guam Guatemala Guernsey Guinea Guinea-Bissau Guyana Haiti Heard Island and McDonald Islands Holy See Honduras Hong Kong Hungary Iceland India Indonesia Iran Iraq Ireland Isle of Man Israel Italy Jamaica Jan Mayen Japan Jersey Jordan Juan de Nova Island Kazakhstan Kenya Kiribati Korea, North Korea, South Korea, South Kuwait Kyrgyzstan Laos Latvia Lebanon Lesotho Liberia Libya Liechtenstein Lithuania Luxembourg Macau Macedonia Madagascar Malawi Malaysia Maldives Mali Malta Marshall Islands Martinique Mauritania Mauritius Mayotte Mexico Micronesia Moldova Monaco Mongolia Montserrat Morocco Mozambique Namibia Nauru Navassa Island Nepal Netherlands Netherlands Antilles New Caledonia New Zealand Nicaragua Niger Nigeria Niue Norfolk Island Northern Mariana Islands Norway Oman Pakistan Palau Panama Papua New Guinea Paracel Islands Paraguay Peru Philippines Pitcairn Islands Poland Portugal Puerto Rico Qatar Reunion Romania Russia Rwanda Saint Helena Saint Kitts and Nevis Saint Lucia Saint Pierre and Miquelon Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Samoa San Marino Sao Tome and Principe Saudi Arabia Senegal Serbia and Montenegro Seychelles Sierra Leone Singapore Slovakia Slovenia Solomon Islands Somalia South Africa South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands Spain Spratly Islands Sri Lanka Sudan Sudan, South Suriname Svalbard Swaziland Sweden Switzerland Syria Taiwan Tajikistan Tanzania Thailand Timor-Leste Togo Tokelau Tonga Trinidad and Tobago Tromelin Island Tunisia Turkey Turkmenistan Turks and Caicos Islands Tuvalu Uganda Ukraine United Arab Emirates United Kingdom United States Uruguay Uzbekistan Vanuatu Venezuela Vietnam Virgin Islands Wake Island Wallis and Futuna West Bank Western Sahara Yemen Zambia Zimbabwe



ULKOPOLIITTINEN INSTITUUTTI
UTRIKESPOLITISKA INSTITUTET
THE FINNISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

NOT JUST ANOTHER TEA PARTY

The lasting value of the OSCE

by Jaakko Iloniemi

Minister Jaakko Iloniemi is a former Finnish diplomat. Between 1965 and 1971 he served as Head of Department for Development Cooperation in the Finnish Foreign Ministry. He has also worked as Ambassador to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), as Undersecretary for Political Affairs and as the Finnish Ambassador to the US.

The Finnish Institute of International Affairs
Kruunuvuorenkatu 4
FI-00160 Helsinki
tel. +358 9 432 7000
fax. +358 9 432 7799
www.fiia.fi

ISBN: 978-951-769-475-9
ISSN: 1799-9553
Language editing: Lynn Nikkanen

The Finnish Institute of International Affairs is an independent research institute that produces high-level research to support political decision-making and public debate both nationally and internationally.

All manuscripts are reviewed by at least two other experts in the field to ensure the high quality of the publications. In addition, publications undergo professional language checking and editing. The responsibility for the views expressed ultimately rests with the authors.

Photo: German Federal Archives / Engelbert Reineke



Leaders of East and West Germany, Erich Honecker and Helmut Schmidt, in conversation during the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe in Helsinki, 1975.

In 1972 the Finnish government decided that Finland would take the bold step of convening an informal group of Helsinki-based European and American ambassadors to discuss the possibility of convening a conference to address issues of European security and cooperation. Much preparatory work had been done since 1969. Ambassador Ralph Enckell, one of the most senior and experienced Finnish diplomats, had met with high representatives of all European and North American countries in order to explore the possibility of convening such a security conference.

A small team of Finnish diplomats was formed to keep in touch with Finnish embassies around Europe and North America, charged with the task of gathering information and impressions about how Finland's offer to play host to a preparatory meeting for European security would be considered.

In actual fact, the phrase 'preparatory meeting' was banned, as it could have prejudiced the whole issue of whether or not to hold a conference. Finland was mindful of the fact that the first initiative had, after all, previously been made by the Soviet Union and hence, amid the Cold War atmosphere, it had been a non-starter. So there was talk of inviting the ambassadors to a very informal 'tea party' instead.

It did not take long to discover that 'tea party' was, in fact, a modest misnomer. The gathering was to take the form of political negotiations conducted in high gear. They lasted from November 1972 until the summer of 1973, and a few weeks later the foreign ministers of the 35 participating states launched the conference proper. The second phase – the working phase – took place in Geneva and lasted from autumn 1973 until summer 1975.

A broad context of security

Many of the processes that have a decisive impact on the developments of our time have their roots in the past. Thus contemporary politics is largely little more than an outgrowth of the past. That may sound like an overstatement – and perhaps it is in some contexts – but in the context of international

relations it seems to come very close to the truth – remembering, of course, that in international relations there are many competing and conflicting truths.

The OSCE of today has too long a history to be recapitulated in the context of this paper. Hence, the aim is merely to highlight some of the various phases or events which will help us to understand where we are today.

A good starting good point would be the countries invited to take part and which were represented at the planned Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE).¹ All European countries were stakeholders, of course, but the formulation that was used, 'nations responsible for security in Europe', defined the geographic content of the entire project. That, of course, embraced the United States, Canada and the Soviet Union, regardless of the fact that much of its territory was beyond continental Europe.

A second point was the fact that – as correctly pointed out in the Report *Helsinki +40: Building the OSCE of the Future* – the security of nations was seen in a broader context than what had thus far been customary. It was not just about the external security of states, interstate relations and military threats. It was also about the economic, environmental and human aspects of security. The security of states was no longer seen as a matter isolated from the security of their citizens. That was a key aspect of the whole project.

Today, this thinking, often called comprehensive security, seems to be self-evident. But it has not always been so. As a matter of fact, some of the first serious battles in the preparatory phase or during the winter of 1972–73 were about this very issue. The group of socialist countries was adamantly opposed to the idea of including issues of human security, which subsequently came to be known as items of Basket III.

1 The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) was renamed the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 1995, to reflect the institutional development from a process to a body of permanent structures, active institutions and mechanisms, including ways to monitor its norms and commitments.

They argued that these matters had no place on the agenda of a conference which was about state security. Issues related to the security of their citizens were the responsibility of the states themselves and, as such, domestic affairs. The entire question of what is to be seen as an internal affair and what belongs to the category of comprehensive security was part of the negotiating process from the beginning to the end. It sometimes still is.

Neutrality in the midst of bloc politics

When reading the report about the OSCE Helsinki+40 process, I also notice that the question of how decisions were to be made – by consensus or, in some cases, by consensus minus one or two, rings a familiar bell. It was thought from the very beginning of the preparatory talks – which were never called by that name – that it would be impossible to treat sensitive political subjects in any other way but by consensus. The rule of consensus – or tacit acceptance of the proposals – was an expression of the sovereignty of the participating states. We were not discussing anything that might even to a small degree impinge upon the sovereignty of the participating states. It was also agreed that military alliances must have no role in the talks. What may have happened in real life was another matter. As we all know, much – very much – happens outside the official meeting halls and although those talks may be decisive they are often held off the record.

So consensus was the basic rule. The only time – as I recall – that the issue of departing from the principle of consensus was seriously discussed was during the conference of the foreign ministers, or stage one of the CSCE in July 1973. The issue was that the Maltese delegation was adamant – defying all appeals – on the question of granting the Mediterranean nations an opportunity to be heard.

‘Why can’t we have a consensus minus one?’ exclaimed the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko. Ultimately, it was possible to convince Maltese Prime Minister Dom Mintoff to drop the issue. But that was a moment when the very idea – contradicting the agreed rules of procedure – was raised in a serious context.

Here we are, of course, in the midst of the essence of the CSCE concept. It was not – and was never intended to be – a supranational body. It was never thought of as a body which could agree on legally binding norms or regulations. Sovereignty was not to be touched upon – that was at the heart of the thinking.

During the almost three years that the process lasted – including the Helsinki Tea Party – it was obvious that, recalling the substantial differences in the politics of the participants, different things had differing importance for the participants. For example, Romania, while being a socialist country by its own definition, wanted to show that it had an identity separate from the Soviet-controlled bloc.

The Federal Republic of Germany, on the other hand, was intent upon ensuring that nothing at the Conference would hinder the possibility – remote, to be sure, but still a possibility – of German reunification. And of course the Soviet Union had, as one of its main goals, recognition of the European interstate borders as they were at the time of the conference.

Although the conference did not recognize any role for military alliances, they were a fact that hovered in the background, and which had an indirect influence upon their members. The European common foreign policy did not yet exist, but the members of the European Community nonetheless coordinated their positions in the framework of political cooperation. Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that the roots of a European Union common foreign policy are to be found in the CSCE process. And as far as the bloc of Warsaw Pact countries was concerned, the Soviet Union carried out the coordination on their behalf.

A number of participating states defined their policy as neutrality or non-alliance. During the preparatory discussions, Austria, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland had already formed a team which facilitated the proceedings in both procedural and substantive matters. They were often supported by the non-allied, and the Yugoslavians in particular held that cooperation in high esteem.

As expressed above, many participating states had their own particular preferences.

For Finland, the case was very clear: we sought recognition of our policy of neutrality, which we defined in terms of great power or bloc politics, not in terms of values and ideology. In that sense we shared the goals of those who emphasized liberal democratic values and a relaxation of controls limiting human contacts or the flow of information across borders.

Of course it was a political victory for Finland that the high-profile phases of the Conference were held in Finland. Now that congregations of European leaders are almost a monthly affair, perhaps it is not overstating the issue to say that this too was a Summit. Hosting such a meeting has sometimes been belittled as a job for a competent master of ceremonies, but this is nonsense. It entailed a multitude of political sensitivities – after all, it was the first comprehensive European Summit after the end of the Second World War.

Gradual evolution

It was remarkable that in the prevailing circumstances – those were the Cold War years, after all – it was possible to reach agreement on a Decalogue of principles guiding relations between the participating states. To be sure, many of the principles were familiar – they had, in one form or another – been stated and restated in many international documents, first and foremost in the Charter of the United Nations. But what was added was more than just a restatement of the existing principles – they were brought into harmony with the European aspirations.

The new territory that was covered was known as the Third Basket. The media have often described the Helsinki Final Act as the Helsinki Accords on Human Rights. That is only part of the whole – and ‘human rights’ was not the chosen wording in the title of the Conference. More accurately, the Third Basket was about how to apply the principles of the Decalogue in practice. The seventh principle of the Decalogue was a key principle in this context: *Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.*

As one might imagine, full agreement on what that means in practice was not an easy

matter to achieve, and it probably never was. There are many different ways to read or interpret loaded political texts. The very same words have different meanings in different political cultures. And timing is also a matter of importance.

One of the Conference items was follow-up, and on this point the views varied considerably. Some delegations saw no need for any kind of follow-up while others – including Finland – were willing to set up some sort of permanent machinery to monitor a follow-up of the principles and the programmes agreed upon. We went as far as to prepare a tentative project paper on how to organize the follow-up.

In other words, some kind of an OSCE was deemed desirable even then. In this respect, we failed – there was opposition to the idea of permanency from both East and West. The reasons for these negative attitudes varied greatly. It is possible that the French did not like the idea of the United States having a permanent presence in the conduct of European affairs. But the Americans were not keen on any permanent machinery either. Hence, their attitude towards an institutionalized follow-up was negative.

The Soviets had initially been interested in some sort of organized follow-up, but as things did not go as they might have anticipated, they were obviously of the opinion that too much monitoring of the implementation of the principles and programmes would not be in their interests. The net result was that there would be agreement on a first follow-up meeting in 1977 in Belgrade. What would happen after that was only defined in loose terms. There would be no permanent machinery, just periodic meetings from time to time as and when the participating states decided.

Now, forty years later, and with the benefit of long experience, it is only natural to ask what might have been different had the OSCE been founded as early as 1975, and not fifteen years later. This is, of course, a purely hypothetical question. My guess is that in the light of the Madrid follow-up meeting and other developments, that might not have been of very much use. After all, the Madrid follow-up meeting almost institutionalized

the CSCE as it was in session from November 1980 until September 1983.

The real change, like so many other political changes, took place only towards the very end of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, or in the Paris Conference in 1990 when the Charter for a New Europe was adopted. Great hopes were attached to that Charter.

In 1999, at the 6th OSCE Summit of Heads of State or Government held in Istanbul, the Charter for European Security was adopted. In the Charter included in the Istanbul Document, it was stated:

The last decade of the twentieth century has brought great achievements in the OSCE area, co-operation has replaced confrontation, but the danger of conflicts between States has not been eliminated. We have put Europe's old divisions behind us, but new risks and challenges have emerged.... We have experienced conflicts which have often resulted from flagrant violations of OSCE norms and principles.

It was also stated that:

Each participating state has equal right to security. We affirm the inherent right of each participating State to be free to choose or change its security arrangements, including treaties of alliance, as they evolve. Each state also has the right to neutrality.

Much of this is, of course, a reconfirmation of what was already agreed upon in Helsinki in 1975. But this commitment to the principles of 1975 is not redundant. Important changes had taken place between 1975 and 1999 – a number of countries had even changed the basis of their national identity by changing their social and political systems. Thus a confirmation was in order.

In that document there was also wording to the effect that institutional arrangements would be further developed. This is an important point.

Replace or reform?

Today, Europe is in the midst of a political storm. Most of us thought that such a storm

was no longer likely to arise in Europe. No wonder that some observers – and representatives of OSCE states – have claimed that the institutional arrangements we have are inadequate given the challenges of our time. Some concrete proposals have been made for new legally binding arrangements in the security area. To my knowledge, nothing workable has been seriously considered as yet.

Is it so that new institutions, legally binding security treaties or the like, could help us solve the problems we live with? Perhaps, but I will reserve judgement until I see what such proposals might include.

The very problems we confront today are well covered by existing instruments of international law, including the United Nations Charter. Other instruments, political rather than legal – including the principles of the OSCE adopted in Helsinki in 1975 and reconfirmed in Istanbul in 1999 – also cover everything that needs to be covered. If all OSCE nations were to live up to the instruments they have confirmed, both legal and political, we would take a giant leap towards peaceful settlement of any crisis – including the current crisis between OSCE members.

It may sound harsh to say that those who make proposals for creating entirely new institutions to replace existing ones usually do so in order to enhance their own national influence in such institutions. That is not unexpected. That is the way politics is played between states. But that also explains why changes are so hard to achieve. Such changes are, almost always, seen as zero-sum games: the proposals tend to be familiar to all those who have tossed coins in order to settle an argument. Heads, I win, tails, you lose.

The composition of the United Nations Security Council is such a body. We all know the many – almost innumerable – efforts made to reform the Security Council, to make it better reflect the political realities of the times. At the time when the present rules were adopted, the world was very different from what it is today. Two large colonial empires, the British and the French, are no more – certainly not in the sense that they were at the end of World War II. The Soviet Union is no more. China, in 1945, was represented by a government which lost its mandate and it

took more than two decades before – to use UN jargon – *the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China were restored*. The problem with the UN Security Council today is that while its composition is perfectly legal it is seen by many as unjustified.

Former British Prime Minister Harold Wilson used to say: a week is a long time in politics. How about 40 years? That is an eternity. That is more than a generation of men, and several generations of politicians and diplomats.

Longevity, as such, is not much of a merit unless there are substantial achievements to be recognized. Although there have been periods in the history of the OSCE when little progress has been achieved, there are others when important advances have been made. The very fact that today – in spite of all the tension between several OSCE states – this organization is not only acceptable and workable, but the best hope members have of removing the obstacles in their path towards an equitable and peaceful settlement of the conflict, resonates loud and clear.

Two reports have recently been made available to those who take a serious interest in the latest developments of the OSCE and its mission. The first is the final report of the Helsinki +40 project, *Helsinki +40: Building the OSCE of the Future*. The second, *Lessons Learned for the OSCE from its Engagement in Ukraine*, is an interim report drafted by a group of eminent persons. Both of these reports shed light on the present state of affairs in the OSCE, evaluate its mission and discuss the need for reforms or innovations in the working procedures.

There are some ideas in these reports which I believe have particular value. One has to do with the very nature of the OSCE. It is odd – and rare – that a large inter-state organization with a large staff and an even bigger mission does not have a legal personality. The reports make it clear that this is a serious obstacle in the organization's work.

It seems to me that the most recent political developments prove that a legal personality would be an important reform. Strengthening the OSCE in difficult times could be one way of creating better instruments for dealing with the problems we face.

Would it really be so difficult to put this right? As I do not participate in the daily work of the organization, I may underestimate the difficulties confronted. But since the authors of the reports believe that this can be put right, I take their word for it.

Both reports give high grades to the field operations of the OSCE in the context of the Ukrainian crisis. What impresses the reader is how remarkable the preparedness of the organization has been in dispatching field teams to the scenes of the conflict without delay. That is only possible if the homework has been carefully done and the planning for emergencies has been truly professional. These are qualities which largely determine the contribution the OSCE can make in the kind of crisis situation we now face.

Safety in institutions

When we were discussing the future of Europe 40 years ago, high hopes were attached to the CSCE principles. We believed that the member states of the CSCE recognized that honouring the agreed principles would be in their own best interests. Why would they have otherwise dedicated so much time and effort to the drafting and honing of those texts? As we all know, differences among the participating states were supposed to be settled on the basis of the Decalogue.

Forty years ago, the calamities of the Second World War were still very much a part of living memory and the life experience of those who did the drafting and negotiating. This was, perhaps even more significantly, in the minds of those who confirmed the decisions with their signature. Forty years ago, the previous World War was a defining factor in the thinking of those who bore the responsibility for the security of their nations and therefore the world.

President Gerald Ford of the United States, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of Germany, President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing of France and President Leonid Brezhnev of the Soviet Union had all known war at first-hand – they were all war veterans. For them, war was not something abstract read about in books on geopolitics or history. Those bitter and tragic memories had a profound impact

on their thinking – and on their contemporaries.

Today, we have a situation where major military manoeuvres are frequent events in various parts of Europe, including the Baltic Sea area and the polar areas of Northern Europe. Suspicious flights and provocative naval movements give rise to serious questions: what is their message, what is their purpose? From Ukrainian territories, we learn about almost daily casualties, both military and civilian. Nuclear weapons are employed in military war games, targets identified on neighbours' territory and even war games may bear names that leave little to the imagination. At the same time, the nuclear arsenals are being replenished and new types of missiles, of unforeseen destructive capabilities, are mass produced.

It is often said that nuclear weapons have such a destructive capacity that they are never going to be used in Europe. The risks of escalation would be so great that only a madman would use them. Does that sound comforting? Not to me. Think about the Europe of the twentieth century. Europe has seen several national leaders that we would describe today as madmen. Major nations have been led into catastrophes because their leaders have shown total irresponsibility not only vis-à-vis their neighbours but also vis-à-vis their own nations.

We also know that many nuclear weapon accidents, due to poor oversight or just sloppy practices, have brought us to the brink of nuclear catastrophes. More nuclear weapons mean more high-risk situations.

Forty years ago, we did think that the kind of Europe we have today – a Europe of hostile military acts – would never again be part of our life experience. Now we know – much to our despair – that it is indeed the case. For this reason, the OSCE and the European leaders have a great responsibility to work diligently towards a peaceful and lawful settlement of the crisis of our time. Restoration of mutual confidence and trust is only possible if we also see the restoration of respect for the jointly agreed principles and legal norms of international conduct.

It is quite often said that since the Helsinki Final Act principles have been violated, they have lost their worth. Since the OSCE

has been unable to prevent differences between nations from turning into open conflicts, the OSCE has lost its value.

These are hasty conclusions. Laws are not annulled if somebody violates them. Principles are not void if they are ignored. Of course it is true that if laws or principles are constantly violated, and those violations are ignored, then the value of the laws and principles diminishes. But the key words are: *if the violations are ignored*. As long as the culprits understand that they are going to pay a high political price for the violations, they will have second thoughts before going against something that they know is right. In such a way, principles can be self-enforcing. Nations want to be respected and to be seen as reliable partners. To achieve that, they have to live up to their commitments.

It is often said about the United Nations that if we were to convene a San Francisco Conference today – as was done 70 years ago – it would most likely be impossible to agree on the UN charter we have today.

Similarly, if the kind of summit we had in Helsinki in 1975 were to be convened today to agree on the kind of Final Act we have, it might be impossible.

But the UN exists, and so does the OSCE. They exist because the leaders in those times did understand that constructive continuity can be assured by creating lasting institutions. That continuity helps us to overcome periods when there are few opportunities for constructive cooperation.

How right was Jean Monnet, often called the founding father of the European Union, when he said:

Without men nothing is possible, without institutions nothing is permanent.

Political and legal institutions that are strong enough to weather storms and upheavals are the best guarantee we have for an orderly and successful management of international relations. An OSCE which can fulfil that role is therefore a worthy aim.