

Highlights from the Second Meeting of the OSCE PA “Call for Action – Helsinki +50 Process”

Main points raised:

- Benefits of the consensus:
 - o equality of all states;
 - o guarantee the concerns of the smaller states;
 - o reinforce the legitimacy and acceptability of the actions taken by the organization;
 - o raises probability that taken decisions and commitments will be implemented.
- Disadvantages of the consensus:
 - o can be misused to prevent decisions and obstruct key meetings;
 - o might lead to micromanagement;
 - o can be used as bargaining chip or tactical move.
- The basic principle of consensus in OSCE decision-making cannot and should not be abolished – so far it has ensured that all the states are at the negotiating table despite their diverging views. Ignoring one’s positions could endanger the security of one or more states. However its use should be managed better.
- Slight variants of the consensus rule already exist within the OSCE: C-1 and C-2:
 - o C-1 allows the OSCE to take action, in cases of clear, gross and persistent violations of key OSCE commitments, without the consent of the state concerned (used once)
 - o C-2 might be considered to assist 2 pS to seek conciliation with a view to resolving a conflict, whenever no results have been achieved in a reasonable amount of time (Never used)
- **However, one needs consensus to change consensus.**
- Decision making should be improved in order to serve the main purpose of the organization, namely ensuring and maintaining peace and security of all pS.
- Apart from introducing some changes to the decision-making process within the OSCE, one should also think about the best mechanism to ensure their implementation.
- Most of the OSCE problems are not institutional but political – bureaucratic tweaks cannot overcome the **lack of political will**.
- The major problem is of political nature, therefore governments and parliaments should first become better aware of the work of the organization before any changes can be discussed.
- The PA has been vocal for many years about increasing transparency and accountability of the organization, including through a reform of the decision-making procedures, and plays an important role in raising the political interest in the organization.

Main suggestions made:

- Countries that have put forward candidates for senior official positions should not be part of the formal decision-making process with the only exception of the MC level, to reach consensus - this could help to avoid conflict of interest.
- Chairpersonship and/or Troika should be encouraged to consult and make decisions in relevant organizational and administrative areas without a need to build consensus for everyone of them.
- Accountability mechanism: Whenever consensus is not reached, the objecting state should provide a reasonable and adequate explanation.
- Decisions could be categorized (political, security, administrative, procedural) and different decision-making procedures might be applied to different categories.
 - o Although this was suggested by many, a certain degree of skepticism was voiced by some, as well. Decisions concerning resources, agenda and dates of certain meetings can be very political. An expert opinion might be helpful to resolve this issue.
- Existing mechanisms within the OSCE should be more utilized and better understood.
- Opting out and/or adopting a list of certain topics system should be considered. This system would allow for certain topics and procedures to be put on the agenda and initiated by a minimal number of pS, for instance in an open-ended format.
- Decisions such as renewal of the mandates of Heads of Institutions should always involve Foreign Ministers to show political recognition and support to the main goals of the organization.
- More focus should be given to the OSCE core business, such as the activities of Field Operations, conflict resolution and election observation.
- To decrease micro-management of the organization and free up space for more substantial debates, the following suggestions should be considered:
 - o Negotiation of a package deal on broad dates and main agenda items for the key annual meetings, like HDIM, EEF, AIAM - omnibus decision in a form of a yearly calendar;
 - o Adoption of a multi-year budget.
- Dialogue should be maintained and strengthened even with regard to non-consensual topics, and with the states that might be in violation of some of the OSCE commitments.

The role of the PA?

- Support the decisions taken but also scrutinize the governments when it comes to important decisions in the OSCE.
- National Parliaments should have more hearings about the work of the OSCE, invite as appropriate OSCE representatives, putting questions to Foreign and other relevant Ministers, to create a stronger political momentum for decisions to be taken in time.
- Specifically, members of the PA could table parliamentary questions on topics such as:
 - o vetoes to substantive decisions,
 - o blocking the calendar of agendas of important meetings,
 - o the adoption of significant decisions,
 - o the appointment of key officials;or invite ministers to give a statement on any relevant political issue on the agenda of the Organization.
- More broadly, generate political interest in national parliaments and with governments that could help raise the visibility of the OSCE, its commitments and actions.
- Enhance interaction between parliamentary and executive sides, especially with regard to the CfA goal: to renew political interest in the organization and raise its effectiveness. Consider inviting Troika and/or CiO to Bureau meetings on this topic.
- PA members should make better use of the meetings with the CiO and SG to ask relevant questions about the effectiveness and the performance of the organization.