

# The OSCE-Mediterranean Partnership and the Arab Uprisings

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On October 25, 2011, the International Peace Institute's (IPI) Vienna office hosted a workshop on how the uprisings and changes in the Arab world affect the partnership between the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and its Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. The workshop also looked into whether the time is ripe to intensify a dialogue on strengthening security and cooperation in North Africa and the Middle East. Participants included representatives of the OSCE's participating states, Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, executive structures, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and Parliamentary Assembly, as well as academics. Discussions were held under the Chatham House rule of nonattribution.

This meeting note was drafted by Stephanie Liechtenstein, a consultant at IPI's Vienna office, with support from Walter Kemp, Director for Europe and Central Asia at IPI. It reflects the *rapporteur's* interpretation of the seminar discussions and does not necessarily represent the view of all other participants.

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## Background

The long-standing relationship between the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and its Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation (MPCs) dates back to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) of the 1970s. The 1975 Helsinki Final Act says that “security in Europe is to be considered in the broader context of world security and is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean area as a whole, and that accordingly the process of improving security should not be confined to Europe, but should extend to other parts of the world, and in particular to the Mediterranean area.”<sup>1</sup> Over the last two decades, the OSCE has developed and intensified relations with six MPCs: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Morocco, Tunisia, and, since 1998, Jordan.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of the Mediterranean dimension of the OSCE is reiterated in virtually every final CSCE/OSCE Summit or Ministerial Council document, often referring to the importance of strengthening security in “adjacent areas” as an important factor for stability in the OSCE area. However, practical cooperation has been limited thus far.

Given the recent dramatic political changes in some of the OSCE's MPCs and in the Arab world in general, it is worth asking how these uprisings and political changes affect the OSCE-Mediterranean partnership. Are there potential new opportunities for cooperation? Furthermore, is the time ripe to revisit the idea of a CSCE/Helsinki-like process for North Africa and the Middle East? These were some of the main issues that were discussed at an IPI workshop held in Vienna on October 25, 2011.

## From “Nonparticipants” to Partners

The partnership between the OSCE and its Mediterranean neighbors has evolved over the past thirty-five years. For the first twenty years, cooperation was limited to official statements repeating the mantra of the Helsinki Final Act that security in Europe is linked to security in the Mediterranean and vice versa.<sup>3</sup>

In the early 1990s, as the CSCE became more institutionalized (eventually transforming itself from a “conference” to an “organization” at the Budapest Summit in 1994), relations between the OSCE and states of the southern Mediterranean also changed. At the 1993 Rome Ministerial Council, Algeria,

1 Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Final Act*, Helsinki, August 1, 1975, p. 36, available at [www.osce.org/mc/58376](http://www.osce.org/mc/58376).

2 In the past, Lebanon, Syria, and Libya have also taken part in CSCE meetings.

Egypt, Israel, Morocco, and Tunisia requested a closer relationship with the CSCE, which resulted in a decision by the Committee of Senior Officials in March 1994<sup>4</sup> that offered these five countries a more structured relationship by, inter alia, inviting them to Ministerial Council meetings, review conferences, and meetings of the OSCE Troika; granting them access to official OSCE documents; and providing them with the opportunity to submit their views on issues of mutual interest. A further step was taken at the 1994 Budapest Summit, where participating states decided to institutionalize the dialogue with the five “non-participating Mediterranean States” (as they were called at the time) and established an “informal, open-ended contact group” in order to “facilitate the interchange of information of mutual interest.”<sup>5</sup> It was also decided that these five countries would be invited to select meetings of the Permanent Council (PC) or the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), when these meetings are devoted to Mediterranean issues.

A growing sense of partnership was reflected in the decision taken in December 1995 to change the designation from “non-participating Mediterranean States” to “Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.”<sup>6</sup>

Jordan became an MPC in May 1998.<sup>7</sup> During the same year, the Permanent Council also adopted Decision No. 233, inviting the MPCs to send observers to electoral missions of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and to second, on a voluntary basis, mission members to OSCE field missions.<sup>8</sup> However, very few MPCs have taken up this offer so far.

The 2003 Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century pointed out that threats originating in adjacent regions are

of increasing importance, and therefore cooperation with the MPCs should be intensified through “early identification of areas of common interest” and by inviting the partners “to participate on a more frequent basis as observers in the PC and FSC meetings.”<sup>9</sup> The strategy also encouraged the MPCs to take part in existing information exchanges in the framework of OSCE confidence- and security-building measures to address threats from outside the OSCE region.

Also in December 2003, the PC adopted Decision No. 571 on “Further Dialogue and Co-operation with the Partners for Co-operation and Exploring the Scope for Wider Sharing of OSCE Norms, Principles and Commitments with Others.”<sup>10</sup> With the adoption of this decision, participating states decided to identify additional fields of cooperation with the partners, to encourage them to voluntarily implement OSCE commitments, to work on procedures for future applications for partnership, and to prepare a report on the outcome of this process. This report was annexed to the 2004 Sofia Ministerial Council Document<sup>11</sup> and ministers tasked the PC and the FSC “to remain seized of the matter.”<sup>12</sup>

The above report clearly stated that “co-operation and interaction with partner states should remain voluntary and be driven by demand.”<sup>13</sup> The report then identified a number of areas in which cooperation could be pursued, such as anti-terrorism activities, border issues, economic and environmental activities, anti-trafficking initiatives, human dimension meetings, election observation, freedom of the media, education and training, side events at OSCE meetings, and internships. As a result, from 2005 onwards an increasing number of thematic decisions adopted at Ministerial Council meetings contained a reference to the partners and invited

3 See, for example, the *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*, Paris, November 19-21, 1990, available at [www.osce.org/mc/39516](http://www.osce.org/mc/39516).

4 “25th Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials, Prague, 2-4 March 1994,” in *The Conference on Security and Co-operation: Analysis and Basic Documents*, edited by Arie Bloed (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer, 1993), Part I, p. 262.

5 CSCE, “Towards a Genuine Partnership in a New Era,” Budapest Summit Document, Budapest, December 5-6, 1994, available at [www.osce.org/mc/39554](http://www.osce.org/mc/39554).

6 OSCE, “Decision No. 94,” OSCE Doc. PC.DEC/94, December 5, 1995, available at [www.osce.org/pc/20366](http://www.osce.org/pc/20366).

7 OSCE, “Decision No. 227,” OSCE Doc. PC.DEC/227, May 22, 1998, available at [www.osce.org/pc/20540](http://www.osce.org/pc/20540).

8 OSCE, “Decision No. 233,” OSCE Doc. PC.DEC/233, June 11, 1998, available at [www.osce.org/pc/20547](http://www.osce.org/pc/20547).

9 OSCE, “OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century,” OSCE Doc. MC.DOC/1/03, Maastricht, December 2, 2003, available at [www.osce.org/mc/17504](http://www.osce.org/mc/17504).

10 OSCE Doc. PC.DEC/571/Corr.1, December 2, 2003, available at [www.osce.org/pc/18297](http://www.osce.org/pc/18297).

11 “Report of the Chairperson of the Informal Group of Friends on the Implementation of Permanent Council Decision No. 571: The OSCE and its Partners for Co-operation,” in OSCE, “Twelfth Meeting of the Ministerial Council,” OSCE Doc. MC.DOC/1/04, Sofia, December 6-7, 2004, pp. 106-134, available at [www.osce.org/mc/41813](http://www.osce.org/mc/41813).

12 OSCE, “Decision No. 17/04: OSCE and its Partners for Co-operation,” OSCE Doc. MC.DEC 17/04, December 7, 2004, available at [www.osce.org/mc/30046](http://www.osce.org/mc/30046).

13 OSCE, “Report of the Chairperson of the Informal Group of Friends,” p. 115.

them to “voluntarily implement the relevant provisions.”<sup>14</sup>

With the establishment of the Partnership Fund in 2007, a new tool was created to finance activities specifically targeted at the Mediterranean partners. While underlining the importance of the above report, participating states decided to create a “specific fund exclusively financed through extrabudgetary contributions.”<sup>15</sup> The fund can be used (i) to finance the participation of representatives from the partner countries in existing OSCE events and activities; (ii) to finance existing OSCE events and activities “in the territory of a participating State that are designed to encourage the Partners for Co-operation to voluntarily implement OSCE norms, principles, commitments and best practices”; and (iii) to finance internships, visits, briefings, and training courses.<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that the emphasis is on activities within the OSCE area, not in the Mediterranean partner countries.

As a further important development, the 2007 Spanish chairmanship of the OSCE introduced a new seating arrangement in the Permanent Council to accommodate the partners at the main table, and made the invitation to the PC meetings a standing one. This practice was commended in the 2007 Ministerial Declaration on the OSCE Partners for Co-operation, and participating states expressed further support for “the efforts of the Partners for Co-operation to promote the OSCE norms, principles and commitments in their regions” and encouraged them to “take further steps towards their voluntary implementation.”<sup>17</sup>

In 2009, when the Greek OSCE chairmanship launched the Corfu Process, it was decided that the partners would be invited to contribute to the discussion “on an ad hoc basis” and “after close consultation with participating States.”<sup>18</sup> In addition, the Greek chairmanship appointed a personal representative for the Mediterranean, tasked with reviewing existing documents.

Like many other CSCE/OSCE documents before it, the Astana Commemorative Declaration Towards a Security Community, adopted at the 2010 OSCE Summit in Astana, underscored the need to enhance the level of interaction with the Partners for Co-operation and recognized “that the security of the OSCE area is inextricably linked to that of adjacent areas.”<sup>19</sup> However, the main focus at Astana was on the “Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area.”<sup>20</sup> There was little mention of the Mediterranean dimension.

## Framework for Dialogue and Cooperation

Today, the OSCE-Mediterranean partnership is based on a broad political framework. Its main elements include:

- The Contact Group that meets periodically and serves as the main venue for dialogue. It is chaired by the incoming chair of the OSCE, and although it is an informal meeting, a number of participating states and MPCs are represented at the ambassadorial level.
- The annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference that provides an opportunity for an exchange of views at a high level. These conferences are also attended by international organizations, parliamentarians, academics, and NGOs.
- The weekly PC and FSC meetings, to which the Mediterranean partners are invited as observers.
- The Ministerial Council meetings, in which the partners participate as observers and have the opportunity to engage in high-level meetings with the OSCE Ministerial Troika and the OSCE Secretary General on the margins.
- The yearly OSCE events, such as the Annual Security Review Conference, the Economic Forum, the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, and the annual and winter sessions of

14 See, for example, “Combating Transnational Organized Crime,” OSCE Doc. MC.DEC/3/05, December 6, 2005; “Further Measures to Prevent the Criminal Use of Lost/Stolen Passports and Other Travel Documents,” OSCE Doc. MC.DEC/6/06, December 5, 2006; “Protecting Critical Energy Infrastructure from Terrorist Attack,” OSCE Doc. MC.DEC/6/07, November 30, 2007; “Further Promoting the OSCE’s Action in Countering Terrorism,” OSCE Doc. MC.DEC/10/08, December 5, 2008; “Strengthening Dialogue and Cooperation on Energy Security in the OSCE Area,” OSCE Doc. MC.DEC/6/09, December 2, 2009.

15 OSCE, “Decision No. 812: Establishment of a Partnership Fund,” OSCE Doc. PC.DEC/812, November 30, 2007, available at [www.osce.org/pc/29502](http://www.osce.org/pc/29502).

16 Ibid.

17 OSCE Doc. MC.DOC/1/07, November 30, 2007, available at [www.osce.org/mc/33180](http://www.osce.org/mc/33180).

18 See OSCE Doc. MC.DEC/1/09, December 2, 2009, available at [www.osce.org/cio/40709](http://www.osce.org/cio/40709).

19 OSCE, “Astana Commemorative Declaration Towards a Security Community,” OSCE Doc. SUM.DOC/1/10, December 3, 2010, available at [www.osce.org/mc/73962](http://www.osce.org/mc/73962).

20 Ibid.

the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to which the Mediterranean partners are invited. Special side events are organized during those meetings for the partners.

- The annual Parliamentary Forum on the Mediterranean.

In short, the Mediterranean dimension has increased steadily over the years. However, there has been a lot of form and little substance. Much of the focus has been on improving dialogue and on the voluntary implementation of OSCE commitments by partners, but there has been little practical cooperation. Could this be changing?

## The OSCE-Mediterranean Dialogue: New Relevance?

The first panel at the IPI workshop examined the current state of the OSCE-Mediterranean dialogue. The first speaker provided an overview of the dialogue's positive achievements and also addressed its shortcomings. In general, the speaker described the OSCE-Mediterranean dialogue as "process oriented" rather than "goal oriented." On the positive side, the dialogue is based on a solid political framework; MPCs have been granted access to all major OSCE fora and can also participate on an operational level, such as in election observation missions. In addition, a special placement program for young diplomats from MPCs has been put in place with the help of the Partnership Fund. Furthermore, the dialogue has helped increase regional cooperation among the MPCs and has led to contact and cooperation with other relevant regional organizations.

Mentioning some of the shortcomings of the dialogue, the speaker explained that although the substance of the dialogue has emerged and evolved step by step, its responsiveness to events and changes in the world has been very limited. Also, outreach activities are missing, such as the inclusion of academics and civil society in the dialogue. Another problem is the difficulty of balancing topics that are of interest to both the MPCs and the fifty-six OSCE participating states. There is also a lack of clarity about the geographical extent of the dialogue—who's in and who's out, and

why? The point was raised as to whether it would make sense to include additional countries such as Libya. Overall, a clear vision of the nature, aims, and goals of the dialogue is missing.

Another speaker pointed out that while the Mediterranean dimension of the OSCE received relatively limited attention during the 2010 OSCE Summit in Astana, this changed dramatically with the Arab uprisings of early 2011. The speaker pointed out that a "true partnership" and a "true dialogue" have become more necessary than ever, and referred to some of the activities that have taken place this year, such as visits by the OSCE chairmanship and ODIHR to the region, better attendance by participating states at the Contact Group meetings, briefings by MPCs on developments in their respective countries at Contact Group meetings, and improvement of the Mediterranean Conferences.

The point was made that the OSCE's room for maneuver in providing assistance to its MPCs is hampered by limitations on out-of-area activities. One speaker, supported by a number of interventions from the floor, suggested that this caveat to OSCE activities should be lifted, or at least given some flexibility. Others cautioned against getting too involved in the internal affairs of partners (including Afghanistan). It was also noted that expanded partnership would necessitate a considerable increase in extrabudgetary contributions.

Since the OSCE is one among a crowded field of players offering assistance to Mediterranean countries in transition, the need for close cooperation with partners like the EU, the League of Arab States, and the Union for the Mediterranean was stressed. It was also noted that the OSCE could work with participating states that have large bilateral missions in the partner states.

Participants also discussed the issue of the OSCE's added value. Among the areas mentioned were electoral support, police reform, the politico-military dimension (like the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security<sup>21</sup>), and ODIHR's work with civil society.

Several speakers—particularly those representing Mediterranean partners—stressed that OSCE

21 The "Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security" was adopted on December 3, 1994 (DOC.FSC/1/95). It is a landmark document in security-sector governance, obliging participating states to provide for democratic oversight of their armed, internal, paramilitary, and intelligence forces, as well as the police.

support and assistance should be demand-driven and that the MPCs should have ownership of this process. Others, from OSCE participating states, noted that no specific request for assistance by MPCs had yet been made, despite several offers from the OSCE. The question was raised as to whether the status quo is due to a lack of interest on the part of the MPCs, or a lack of clarity from the OSCE as to what it can offer.

The importance of meaningful dialogue was also stressed, with emphasis on a “two-way street.” For example, it was suggested that participating states should be more present and active in Contact Group meetings while MPCs should clearly articulate their needs and take advantage of the available opportunities.

One participant made a strong appeal to make use of the current window of opportunity in order to strengthen OSCE-Mediterranean cooperation. He further underlined the need to remove some procedural constraints, like those on organizing out-of-area events or activities, and stated that participating states urgently need to reach agreement on the specific areas of OSCE assistance to its MPCs. Another participant agreed and stressed that the OSCE could not afford to wait too long and should find its specific “niche” soon; otherwise, the opportunity would be missed, not least because of the plethora of international organizations already active in the region. Other participants disagreed, saying that the partners need time, and that the OSCE should not act in haste.

The need for concrete outcomes at the upcoming OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania, on December 6-7, 2011, was underlined. It was stated that a Ministerial Council decision or declaration on the Mediterranean dimension would enhance and improve the OSCE-Mediterranean partnership and offer an appropriate reaction to the recent changes in the region. Some participants made clear that it is not enough to adopt a declaration that merely underlines the importance of cooperation: this would represent a missed opportunity.

Electoral support was mentioned as one possible area for OSCE assistance. In this context, the elections for a Constituent Assembly in Tunisia, held on October 23, 2011, were raised. One participant stated that international election observers

(including from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly) were warmly welcomed by Tunisian authorities, although less warmly by some other European election observers (who feel that the OSCE should not observe elections outside the OSCE area). The opportunities for interparliamentary dialogue were discussed, recalling the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s experience in this area. Another participant explained that the OSCE offers tailor-made assistance to its MPCs in the areas of electoral reform, human rights institutions, the judiciary, and police reform. However, so far, no formal request for assistance has been received. It was suggested that while the OSCE should keep its offer on the table, work with civil society partners should be continued.

As additional areas of possible OSCE assistance, the following were suggested: (i) assistance with regard to displaced populations, (ii) postconflict rehabilitation work, and (iii) inclusion of civil society through the organization of a civil society forum in one of the MPC states.

Many participants stressed the importance of coordination with other international organizations dealing with Mediterranean issues. The OSCE has a well-established and regular dialogue with other international organizations; for example, in the form of annual tripartite meetings with the UN and the Council of Europe. It also works closely with the EU and regional organizations. Participants recalled recent meetings between the OSCE Secretariat and the League of Arab States, and it was noted that there is considerable scope for closer cooperation between these two organizations.

The issue was also raised as to whether the time is ripe to expand the number of Mediterranean partners. It was noted that there is still a lack of clarity about the criteria for becoming a partner. Some participants said that expanding the number of partners is a desirable goal. Others felt that the time is not ripe due to political circumstances. The possibility for OSCE Partners for Co-operation to become full participating states was also raised, but it was added that in such a case, partner states would first need to accept and sign up to all OSCE commitments. The example of Mongolia potentially moving from being an Asian Partner for Co-operation to an OSCE participating state was mentioned.

## Revolutions in the Arab World and Resulting Geopolitical Changes

The second panel focused on the revolutions in the Arab world and examined the resulting geopolitical changes. One speaker pointed out that it is still difficult to assess the current political changes in the Arab world and believed that it is too soon to predict all the outcomes. The speaker compared the situation to the 1848 revolutions in Europe and explained that although the original ideas of 1848 were initially crushed by counter-revolution, they survived and reemerged in 1867 and were enshrined in the constitution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Similarly, the calls during the Arab revolutions for greater democracy, rule of law, economic opportunities, and an end to corruption might not be entirely implemented by the new governments after the first elections, but they can prevail and reemerge.

The speaker raised the question of whether, as a result of the uprisings, political Islam will become stronger or secular parties will prevail, or whether it will all end in chaos.

The speaker talked about the impact of one crisis on another in the “Greater Middle East” due to transborder religious, ethnic, and political ties. She also demonstrated the knock-on effect of crises in one region on others, including in the OSCE area, due to a spillover of violence, population flows, and shifts in the balance of power. The impact of energy politics was also stressed, for example in relation to Libya and Iraq. The impact of the uprisings on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was mentioned, as was the more assertive role being played by Turkey in the region.

The speaker pointed out the role of “society” in the uprisings. Despite Margaret Thatcher’s assertion that “there is no such thing as society,” the events in the Arab world in 2011 demonstrate that societies can rally together in the name of justice and dignity, and against corruption and elites that are disconnected from the needs of their people. The role played by the traditional media and social media was highlighted.

One participant disagreed with the comparison with the 1848 revolutions and argued that the current uprisings and revolutions in the Arab world

are unique in their character and in history. Another participant agreed that the results of the current uprisings are still not clear and that the impact is still to be seen. One speaker referred to a “revolution of expectations.”

## The CSCE/Helsinki Process as Inspiration for the Region

The third panel at the IPI workshop looked into the question of whether the CSCE/Helsinki process could be used as a model or a source of inspiration for promoting security, democracy, and development in North Africa and the Middle East. One speaker expressed hesitation with regard to this idea, given the very different cultural, political, and historic circumstances during the Cold War more than three decades ago. He pointed out that, unlike the countries in North Africa and the Middle East, Eastern European countries at the time were linked by ideological uniformity. In addition, the events that ended the Cold War in Europe in 1989 were directed at an external enemy; however, the uprisings in the Arab world are focused on different corrupt regimes “whose leaders are old but wealthy at a time when the populations are getting younger but poorer.” What is also different is that European countries all had experience with democracy and had relatively well-established institutions in place. This is not the case in the Arab world, noted a participant, where experience with democracy is largely missing (with the exception of Egypt).

The speaker also stated that the Arab countries first need time to sort out their domestic priorities before they will be interested in convening a multilateral conference. He also noted that elections in the aftermath of the Arab Spring will likely empower leaders with moderate Islamist credentials, and that many of them would probably regard such initiatives with a degree of suspicion. Finally, the speaker highlighted that any serious attempt at promoting multilateral security cooperation in the region would have to include efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and could only progress if there is a breakthrough in the peace process. He made an appeal to the OSCE to allow the Arab countries to reach their own conclusions.

Another participant was more open to the idea of using the CSCE/Helsinki process as a model for the

region and explained that multilateral cooperation could create an environment more conducive to peace and good-neighborly relations. He raised examples of previous cases where the CSCE/Helsinki process was held up as a useful model: in 1976 Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin addressed the Congress of the Socialist International in Geneva and proposed the convening of a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Middle East (CSCM), along the lines of the CSCE;<sup>22</sup> in 1991 Crown Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan made a suggestion along the same lines;<sup>23</sup> in 1990 Italy and Spain proposed to create a Conference on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean during a specialized CSCE meeting on Mediterranean issues;<sup>24</sup> in 1994 the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty contained a provision in which the parties committed themselves to the creation of a CSCM;<sup>25</sup> in 1996 British Foreign Secretary Malcom Rifkind proposed an OSCE-type Organization for Cooperation in the Middle East;<sup>26</sup> and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressed his support for the British initiative in an address to the OSCE Summit in Lisbon in 1996.<sup>27</sup>

The idea has cropped up again recently; for example, in Michael McFaul's spring 2008 article in the *Journal of Democracy*, in which the Stanford University professor and nominee for the position of US ambassador to Russia argues that "to promote security, development and democracy, the Middle East desperately needs its own Helsinki process, including a permanent, multilateral security organization."<sup>28</sup> Also, in March 2011 Benjamin L. Cardin, US senator for Maryland and chairman of the US Helsinki Commission argued strongly in favor of a Helsinki-like process for the Middle East.<sup>29</sup>

Participants also discussed initiatives that have already been launched, such as the EU's Barcelona Process and the Union for the Mediterranean.

While many attempts have been made over the past three decades to promote cooperation in the Middle East, most have failed to gain traction. It was pointed out that, despite the recent dramatic

developments in the Arab world, many of the same reasons why such initiatives were unsuccessful in the past still exist today. Tensions between several countries in the Middle East would, it was felt, make it difficult to initiate such a process from within the region, and any attempt to impose such an idea externally would be rejected. Others pointed out that it is precisely because there are tensions (as in Europe in the 1970s) that dialogue is so vital.

## Conclusion: New Momentum for the OSCE-Mediterranean Partnership

Recent changes and events in the Arab world could give new momentum to the OSCE-Mediterranean partnership. It is important that the OSCE makes use of this window of opportunity and seizes the moment. "The time is now or never," said one participant.

For this purpose, the partnership needs to be made more substantive, and procedural constraints, such as the difficulty of organizing "out-of-area" activities, need to be removed. A substantive Ministerial Council decision or declaration could help take the OSCE-Mediterranean dialogue to a new level. It should identify the OSCE's specific areas of assistance and clarify how they differ from and feed into assistance provided by other international organizations. The involvement of the Mediterranean partners in this process is crucial so that they can clearly identify their needs and feel a sense of ownership in the process.

As for a multilateral dialogue on strengthening security, stability, and democracy in North Africa and the Middle East, this will depend on the initiative of countries from the region. OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and OSCE participating states bordering the northern shore of the Mediterranean are well-placed to inform such a process, given their experience in promoting security and cooperation through the OSCE.

22 "Statement to the 13th Socialist International Congress by Prime Minister Rabin," Geneva, November 27, 1976, available at [www.mfa.gov.il](http://www.mfa.gov.il).

23 El Hassan bin Talal, "Das Jordanische Konzept einer KSZNO. Basierend auf einer Erklärung des jordanischen Kronprinzen El Hassan bin Talal sowie seines umfassenden Konferenzpapiertes [The Jordanian Concept of a CSCME. Based on a Statement by Jordan's Crown Prince El Hassan bin Talal and His Detailed Conference Paper]," *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* 6 (1991): 508-511.

24 "Palma de Mallorca Meeting on the Mediterranean (1990)," in Bloed, *The Conference on Security and Co-operation*, Part I, p. 87.

25 *Treaty of Peace between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*, October 26, 1994, Article 4, available at [www.mfa.gov.il](http://www.mfa.gov.il).

26 As cited in Christopher Bellamy, "Rifkind Seeks Security Pact for the Middle East Bloc," *The Independent*, November 5, 1996, available at [www.independent.co.uk](http://www.independent.co.uk).

27 Address by Prime Minister Netanyahu to the OSCE, Lisbon, December 3, 1996, available at [www.mfa.gov.il](http://www.mfa.gov.il).

28 Michael McFaul, "A Helsinki Process for the Middle East," *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas* No. 8 (Spring 2008).

29 Speech by Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin of Maryland, "The OSCE as a Model for the Middle East," March 2, 2011, available at [www.csce.gov](http://www.csce.gov).

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