

28th OSCE Ministerial Council Side Event

**10th Anniversary of Ministerial Council Decision 3/11
on “Elements of the Conflict Cycle”**

**Intervention by
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Thank you, Tuula, for giving me the floor, and my gratitude also goes to the organisers of this side event for inviting me to contribute. After all, I consider Decision 3/11 to be partly my child, since I led one of the working groups under the Lithuanian Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Chair-in-Office (CiO) that led to its adoption.

MC Decision 3/11 is clearly a landmark decision of the OSCE worth celebrating! I hope that this not just a commemoration looking back, but also an opportunity to look forward with a view to strengthening the toolbox based on Decision 3/11 and – equally importantly – to sensitising and incentivising OSCE Participating States to use its tools more systematically.

I will make three quick points: (1) on the process leading to the adoption of Decision 3/11; (2) on the mediation support capacity that the decision called for; and (3) recalling the only formal early warning that I issued to Participating States in November 2018.

So, let me start by the diplomatic process conducted by the Lithuanian CiO that led to the successful adoption of Decision 3/11. It would be erroneous to assume that the political environment was much more conducive to achieving consensus in 2011 than it is today. In my view, what was decisive was a strategic resolve and a smart process proposed by the Lithuanian CiO. The Lithuanians made it clear from the very beginning that achieving a decision on the conflict cycle was one of their key strategic objectives. Accordingly, they invested a great deal of diplomatic capital and launched a process early in the year. They asked four ambassadors to chair working groups that would focus on four key aspects of the conflict cycle. Progress was also regularly assessed by raising the ongoing work in the weekly political dialogues with Participating States. This allowed the early identification of stakeholders' concerns and the finding of ways to address them. And believe me, there were quite a few sceptics. This is not to say that there wasn't a relatively dramatic end game in the run-up to the Vilnius Ministerial, where the CiO also had to invest political capital, but after close to nine months of serious work on the text it was ripe for adoption. I believe that this process should be a source of inspiration for any CiO pursuing a strategic thematic objective.

This brings me to my second point: the creation of mediation support capacities. The negotiations on Decision 3/11 came at a time when the international community had already reached a certain degree of maturity in developing its tools for facilitating dialogue and mediating conflict. So there was an obvious opportunity to learn from other multilateral and bilateral actors engaged in conflict mediation, be it the UN Department of Political Affairs Mediation Support Unit or mediation support structures set up by countries like Norway and Switzerland. This helped to conceptualise mediation support at the OSCE in a state-of-the-art way, building on four pillars: (1) the provision of operational support to CiOs, their special representatives, heads of field offices and other OSCE mediators; (2) outreach, networking and cooperation with other actors; (3) knowledge management; and (4) training and capacity-building. If we look back over the last decade, it is fair to say that the mediation support team that was created in the Conflict Prevention Centre on the conceptual basis of Decision 3/11 has achieved quite a good track record. The acceptance of mediation support by CiOs, the established conflict resolution formats and the number of field offices have all grown considerably, which is not to say that there isn't still quite some room for improvement. However, the time has come to seriously consider moving to another level of OSCE mediation support by strengthening the capacities of a still very small unit to, for instance, embed mediation support more systematically in ongoing processes. It is also time to move the resourcing of the unit gradually from secondments and ex-budgetary funding to support by the Unified Budget.

Thirdly and finally, let me recall the only occasion when I issued a formal early warning to OSCE Participating States: in late November 2018, in response to tensions in the Azov Sea that had been building up for over half a year. I believe that it was important and correct that the OSCE should issue a formal early warning and offer a range of de-escalation instruments that we had developed with the Italian CiO under Minister Moavero Milanesi. The Ministerial Council in Milan presented a good opportunity to discuss the de-escalation agenda with the parties. While it is true that the Russian Federation appeared to have no interest in internationally mediated de-escalation measures, nonetheless, it did stop adding further fuel to the fire. So I believe it was worth the effort! Having referred to the provision of this formal early warning, I should immediately add that in most cases the Secretary General implements her/his early warning function through informal channels, mostly through the regular dialogue between the Secretariat, the CiO and the Troika, as well as through regular consultations with key organisation stakeholders.

Let me conclude by again underlining the relevance of MC Decision 3/11 for the OSCE's conflict-cycle-related work. I believe that, ten years after the decision's adoption, Participating States should embark on a stocktaking exercise and identify areas where they wish to strengthen and modernise their conflict-cycle toolbox. In doing so, I would invite them to have a good look at the "Stockholm Declaration on the Need to Critically Review and Strengthen the OSCE's Work on Conflicts to Strengthen Security, Protect Human Rights and Uphold the Helsinki Principles", published by the Civic Solidarity Platform on 1 December 2021.

Thank you for your attention!