

# **Reimagining the OSCE for a New Generation**

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*Abridged Version*







participating states fail to reach consensus on selecting a Chair, the OSCE faces institutional paralysis.



address environmental issues and security, these initiatives are inadequate in addressing an issue that is so pressing for our generation. The OSCE's stance on and approach to environmental issues is outdated, and the following recommendations demonstrate the various ways in which the OSCE should refocus its commitments.

*2.1 The OSCE should establish an environmental security dimension, separating the present economic and environmental dimension into two parts.*

Within the OSCE, the environment is currently a part of the economic and environmental security dimension.<sup>17</sup> This dimension is responsible for issues including but not limited to: good governance, connectivity, digitalization, migration governance, climate change, disaster risk reduction, environmental security, and energy security. This dimension ought to be divided for two reasons. First, as it is, the dimension is responsible for too many issues, resulting in unnecessary pressure on the Office of the Coordinator. Second, this dimension was developed in the 1990s, and, in the 1999 charter, environmental issues were clearly included as an afterthought.

*2.2 To implement Recommendation 2.1, the OSCE should create a new Environmental Forum, Environmental Committee, and Office of the Coordinator of Environmental Activities.*

This will allow for focused policy alignment for both economic and environmental issues, as well as targeted resource allocation.

*2.3 The OSCE should expand current informal working groups on the environment.*

With the formalization of the environmental element of the OSCE, we want to create an environment where policy can be discussed and negotiated informally. The OSCE already has an informal working group on environmental issues called "Friends of Environment," launched at the 2019 Forum on Economic and Environmental Issues.<sup>18</sup> The group only has 14 members, so we recommend that this group expand and welcome other OSCE participating states.

*2.4 The OSCE should take advantage of the existing security and organization structures to institute a strengthened focus on environmental protection and security.*

The OSCE has considered the importance of the link between environment and security since the organization's inception. The threat of environmental degradation and climate change to security has only increased since then. The 2021 ministerial decision affirming the importance of cooperation "to address the challenges caused by climate change" emphasizes the political will within the organization to increase environmental protection and security.<sup>19</sup> For this reason, we propose reimagining current security structures of the OSCE to meet the increasing global environmental challenges we face today.

*2.5 The OSCE should include environmental protection and security in the mandates of all ongoing and future missions.*

Missions are an important and effective part of the OSCE's field work. Some participating states have used extra-budgetary funding to pursue programs in climate security.<sup>20</sup> However, this limits the scope of these projects and makes building the role of the OSCE in environmental security more difficult.<sup>21</sup> Including the environmental dimension in mission mandates is a practical way to enhance the OSCE's environmental action. This should encompass assessing environmental security risks, such as climate risk, and taking direct action in areas such as mitigation and adaptation.

*2.6 The OSCE should strengthen the focus on environmental protection and security in missions where this angle is already present.*

Some field missions already include certain environmental activities, such as the Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>22</sup> However, current work within missions is often limited in scope. Given the increasing environmental challenges, particularly climate change, which will disproportionately impact our generation, we value improving the scope of existing environmental action in missions.

*2.7 The OSCE should strengthen the emphasis on environmental security and protection in the mandates of other OSCE bodies.*

The OSCE should seriously consider including environmental security in the scope of its other offices and bodies. Recommendation 2.7 could be easily implemented by including a review of climate security risk in other more expansive security risk assessments and conflict prevention.<sup>23</sup>

### **3. Implement a Consensus Minus Two Failsafe for the OSCE Chairmanship**

Our generation is acutely aware of the importance of taking strong actions to preserve our future through the multilateral system like by removing bureaucratic barriers. We recognize the value of existing structures of international co-operation, and we are focused on ensuring that these tools remain effective. Consensus meets our generation's standard of global interconnectivity and communication, but it allows one state to hold the organization 'hostage.' This prevents decision-making for even the most basic administrative matters, such as setting the budget or choosing a Chair.

*3.1 To ensure the continuation of the fundamental administrative functions of the organization, the OSCE should introduce a new mechanism, referred to here as the "Estonia Mechanism," which would allow for a "consensus minus two" model if countries fail to reach consensus on selecting a new Chair of the OSCE at least one year before the Chair would take office.*





*4.2 The OSCE should emulate WHO's public sector guidelines when building their own portfolio of donors.*

WHO published *Guidelines on Working with the Private Sector to Achieve Health Outcomes*, which lays out some fundamental principles for working with private companies.

Additionally, financial consistency matters from a human resources perspective. If the OSCE cannot credibly commit to paying their employees in the long run because of budgetary disputes and an inability to reach consensus, the OSCE risks losing talent. If the quality of the people working for OSCE decreases, so too will the quality of the OSCE's work and, therefore, its credibility in the field as well as in the international arena. A two-year budget cycle and an automatic rollover process for





18. “Guidelines on Working with the Private Sector to Achieve Health Outcomes.” World Health Organization, November 30, 2000. [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/EB107/ee20.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB107/ee20.pdf).
19. Hernández, Gabriela Rosa. “OSCE in Crisis Over Russian War on Ukraine.” Arms Control







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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> “History,” OSCE, accessed December 6, 2023, <https://www.osce.org/history#:~:text=The%20OSCE%20traces%20its%20origins,negotiation%20between%20East%20and%20West.>

<sup>2</sup> “History.” U.S. Mission to the OSCE, March 18, 2016. <https://osce.usmission.gov/our-relationship/about-osce/history#:~:text=These%20developments%20were%20reflected%20in,stability%20in%20all%20three%20dimensions.>

<sup>3</sup> Martina Huber et al., “The Effectiveness of OSCE Missions: The Cases of Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina,” Netherlands Institute of International Relations “Clingendael,” February 2003, [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20030200\\_cru\\_paper\\_huber.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20030200_cru_paper_huber.pdf), 27.

<sup>4</sup> “Charter of Paris for New Europe - OSCE,” OSCE, 1990, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/6/39516.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Valery Perry, “The OSCE Suspension of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia,” *Helsinki Monitor* 9, no. 4 (1998): 44–54, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157181498x00538>.

<sup>6</sup> Nat Parry, “To Realize Its Mission, the OSCE Must Have Access to Its Full Toolbox, Participants Say in Discussion of Consensus Rule,” OSCE PA, March 10, 2021, <https://www.oscepa.org/en/news-a-media/press-releases/2021/to-realize-its-mission-the-osce-must-have-access-to-its-full-toolbox-participants-say-in-discussion-of-consensus-rule>.

<sup>7</sup> Andrei Zagorski, “A Contested Consensus Rule,” Brill, June 22, 2014, [https://brill.com/view/journals/shrs/25/2/article-p180\\_3.xml#fn5](https://brill.com/view/journals/shrs/25/2/article-p180_3.xml#fn5).

<sup>8</sup> Ronny Patz, “The Budgeting and Resourcing of the OSCE in Comparative Perspective,” *OSCE Insights* 2023, 2024, 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748917366-03>, 6.

9

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<sup>22</sup> “Environmental Activities,” OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-bosnia-and-herzegovina/environmental-activities>.

<sup>23</sup> “Advancing the Role of the OSCE in the Field of Climate Security,” SIPRI Policy Brief, September 2021, [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/pb\\_2109\\_osce\\_role\\_in\\_climate\\_security\\_0.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/pb_2109_osce_role_in_climate_security_0.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> “Funding and Budget,” OSCE, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://www.osce.org/who/86#:~:text=The%20OSCE%20is%20funded%20by,from%20its%2057%20participating%20States>.

<sup>25</sup> “OSCE and Thomson Reuters Are Partnering on the ‘Be Safe’ Campaign,” OSCE, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://www.helpforukrainians.info/about/>.

<sup>26</sup> “Funding and Budget,” OSCE, accessed December 20, 2023, <https://www.osce.org/funding-and-budget>.

<sup>27</sup> “United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security 2023 Call for Proposals,” United Nations, accessed December 7, 2023