



Secretary General Lamberto Zannier
Opening Address to the OSCE Chairmanship Conference
Shared Future: Building and Sustaining Peace,
the Northern Ireland Case Study”
Dublin, 27 April 2012

President Ahtisaari,
Tánaiste,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the Irish Chairmanship for organizing this Conference, which gives us a genuine and timely opportunity to draw on past experiences and lessons learned from the case of Northern Ireland, as we look at strengthening the longer role of the OSCE in preventing once revolving conflicts in its area.

Of course, we all know very well that conflicts and their causes differ and that each has of them has its own dynamics. Lev Tolstoi once said: “*Happy families* are all alike; every unhappy *family* is unhappy in its own way.”

However, while we need to address the specifics of each conflict in their own right and strive to find tailor made solutions for each one of them, no one would disagree that we can nevertheless draw on past experiences, good practices and successful examples from elsewhere, when working on conflict settlements.

As we heard from the statements so far, this is exactly what this gathering is providing to us, demonstrating that the Northern Ireland case can give us important guidance in this respect.

I would like to highlight some key lessons that the OSCE has learned, relevant for conflict settlement:

1. The parties to a conflict need to build trust between themselves;
2. They need to develop the political will and to adequately prepare the local populations to take the difficult decisions needed for a lasting conflict settlement; and
3. As we have heard in earlier statements this morning, constructive relationship between the relevant governments must be promoted as a key condition for a successful peace process.

These points are ultimately interlinked and also we as the OSCE, as impartial facilitators in many conflicts, know well that we need to help the parties to the conflict achieve them.

Through our field operations in South Eastern and Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, the OSCE institutions, in particular, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and our specialized departments, like the conflict prevention centre, we work with participating States and other actors throughout the OSCE area in advocating compromise solutions and investments into peace processes.

In the OSCE a key term we use on a daily basis is “confidence- building.” The OSCE is engaged in confidence-building from Moldova to Kyrgyzstan and we are just about to publish an OSCE Guide on non-military Confidence Building Measures.

Re-building confidence which has been destroyed through a violent conflict, and convincing people to take the risks and make the political investment necessary to come to a conflict settlement is a tremendous challenge. It requires huge courage, a leap of faith and unwavering leadership. The case of Northern Ireland is as much an example which proves that reconciliation and peace are possible, as it is an example of the challenges that peacemakers and mediators face on the road to conflict settlement.

The new steps the OSCE has most recently taken in this regard go in two directions:

(1) We are strengthening our early warning and conflict prevention capabilities to prevent escalations from occurring in the first place; and

(2) We are to improving our mediation support capabilities to better help the parties in their settlement efforts.

Both of these elements are cornerstones of a decision adopted last December by the OSCE Foreign Ministers in Vilnius. As we are now turning this decision into concrete action, I will report by mid July on the progress made and will propose possible options for the way forward.

To strengthen our capabilities in early warning, we have developed internal early warning guidelines, which in time will turn into operational procedures. The aim is to use OSCE's network of field presences and thematic expertise to detect, in a timely way, worrisome trends and develop effective response options before it is too late. But in this effect, we cannot succeed by working in isolation. Co-ordination, information sharing and co-operation with other international and regional organizations are vital.

Early warning is sensitive – wave the red flag too early and you risk undermining quiet diplomacy and negotiations on the ground – and perhaps even pushing the sides into a corner – alert the international community too late and you may lose the opportunity to exert high level political pressure to avert a crisis. In the end it is mixture of both an art and a science, coupled with the necessary tools and experience to assess the situation on the ground.

We are also looking into ways to strengthen our early action capabilities, including through fact-finding and expert teams. Further improving our ability to recruit and dispatch suitable experts in a short period of time will be fundamental to addressing emerging crisis and preventing conflicts from escalating.

On mediation, we are working closely with the UN, the EU and other international and regional organizations in developing guidance on effective mediation. We intend to develop a systematic mediation-support capacity and to strengthen the role of OSCE mediators, and to build capacity for local mediators in acknowledgment of the need for local ownership.

We heard Secretary of State Hilary Clinton's statement on the role that women have to play in conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. The OSCE is committed to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security and has highlighted the importance of including women throughout the conflict cycle. In this regard I am glad to say that in recent months the presence of women in positions of responsibility within our field operations has been remarkably improved, including in one field operation directly engaged in a conflict settlement process. I agree that it is important to include women in conflict prevention and mediation in order to reach peace settlements that address the concerns of the entire population, as equal access for women to protection, aid and structures that assist in the reconstruction of a society, must

be ensured. As the Northern Ireland case so pointedly shows us, women like Nobel Prize Laureates Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan had an important role to play in the peace process and understanding the experiences of women throughout the conflict cycle is necessary for our work in conflict situations.

In concluding, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Irish Chairmanship again for sharing the Irish experience with the wider OSCE community today and in the framework of other events envisaged by the Chairmanship in this direction. I look forward to the forthcoming discussions which will address key issues for building confidence and making peace processes work. I am also looking very much forward to working with the Irish Chairmanship to develop further steps towards strengthening the OSCE in its capacity to prevent conflicts and to help to settle them through confidence building and effective mediation and dialogue facilitation.

Thank you for your attention.