

Delivered by DG in Vienna on 12/11

Briefing by Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Petrovsky
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva
to the Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Thursday, November 19, 1998

Vienna, Austria

Mr. Chairman-in-Office,
Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address the Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and I thank you, Ambassador Kobieracki, for taking the initiative in this regard. I also wish to thank Secretary-General Aragona for the excellent cooperation he and his colleagues always extend to me and my office. As this is my introductory encounter with the Council, I will focus my remarks on efforts to enhance cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in general -- a priority to which Secretary-General Annan has attached special importance since taking office in January 1997 -- and to the deepening of relations between the UN and OSCE in particular.

Experience throughout this decade has shown that such cooperation is becoming vital to the promotion of peace and security, sustainable development and democratization, not least because of the new challenges posed by modern conflict and the fact that the vast majority of disputes today are of an intra- rather than inter-state nature. Moreover, the concepts of "human security" and "the human dimension" -- with economic, social and environmental factors taken into account alongside more traditional geopolitical

considerations -- are now widely recognized by the UN and regional organizations as being fundamental to global stability. Ultimately, our organizations have the same principles and objectives at heart; indeed almost all the countries represented in this room are also members of the United Nations, and promoting understanding amongst ourselves and our institutions through continuous exchange of information, contacts between officials at all levels of our organizations, and sharing experiences and lessons learned from the common challenges that face us greatly facilitates this process. There is more than enough work for everyone to do. The mandates entrusted to us by our member states should not be viewed as "competitive;" rather as complementary.

In this, my first meeting with you, I ask what can we in the United Nations do to support OSCE's efforts? How can the mosaic of UN programmes, funds and agencies based in Geneva -- whose areas of competence are more operational and technical than political, away from the limelight of New York -- facilitate your work? How can the United Nations Office at Geneva, for example, distill for you in practical ways the five broad areas of know-how and expertise that characterize the UN system's activities in Geneva -- namely, humanitarian assistance and human rights, trade and development, science and technology, disarmament, research and training? I know that OSCE has developed excellent cooperation with the UN High Commissioners for Refugees and Human Rights, and has established a range of work modalities with them both in the field and at headquarters levels. An important Memorandum of Understanding was recently signed between the OSCE Secretariat and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Likewise, your organization has a special relationship with the Economic Commission for Europe. For its part, UNOG is well placed to assist OSCE in enhancing cooperation with the network of other organizations in

Geneva and to coordinate their inputs to you in a meaningful way.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to take this opportunity to express gratitude on behalf of my Geneva-based colleagues for the meeting you arranged on 29 October between representatives of our diverse organizations and the OSCE Security Model Committee, in connection with the deliberations on the Document-Charter on European Security. There was thorough cooperation between the OSCE Secretariat and my office in preparing the UN's participation in this meeting; on a practical level, this type of collaborative exercise demonstrates our capacity to streamline and make more efficient our own interaction. Moreover, and more substantively, your invitation to UN practitioners from Geneva and Vienna to provide input on the elaboration of a Platform for Cooperative Security is a clear example of the mutually reinforcing spirit that has evolved between our organizations since the signing in May 1993 of the Framework for Cooperation and Coordination between the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (now the OSCE). In fact, since its 48th session in 1993, the UN General Assembly has annually reaffirmed the importance of such ties, and has called on the Secretary-General to explore with the Chairman-in-Office and the Secretary-General of the OSCE possibilities for further enhancement of cooperation, information exchange and coordination. The Secretary-General's latest report to the Assembly in this regard, prepared in accordance with resolution A/52/22 of 21 November 1997, will very soon be issued in New York. In it he reviews the contacts maintained at the highest level and, increasingly, among experts of the respective Secretariats. He underlines cross representation in meetings, joint activities and projects (such as the CISCONF) and the whole range of activities in the field, including areas where there is an informal division of labour. In short, he paints a picture of on-going consultation and interaction between our

institutions.

In his report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Program For Reform," Secretary-General Annan stated that cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations "will be intensified and regional organizations will increasingly become partners of the United Nations in all activities related to the maintenance of international peace and security, including conflict prevention". With a view to enhancing such cooperation, he convened on 28 and 29 July 1998 a third meeting with heads of regional organizations -- in which Secretary-General Aragona participated on behalf of the OSCE. The first two meetings (held in 1994 and 1996) had focused on general principles and modalities to guide cooperation between the UN and regional organizations in the field of international peace and security. Based on understandings reached at those meetings, the July gathering examined the potential for greater interaction and cooperation between the UN and regional organizations in the field of conflict prevention. Addressing the concept of "a culture of prevention", meeting participants considered inter alia two dimensions: first, "structural prevention", namely the need to address economic, social, ethnic and other root causes of conflict, and to promote greater respect for human rights, maintenance of the rule of law and strengthening of democratic institutions. Second, "operational prevention" which included traditional notions of conflict prevention along the continuum of early warning, through preventive diplomacy, preventive disarmament (especially small arms), preventive deployment and on to peacebuilding, both before and after conflicts. The meeting recognized that the UN and regional organizations possessed different strengths and capabilities in the area of early warning and prevention and that the focus should now be to achieve greater

complementarity, as mutually reinforcing institutions.

Participants saw value in holding a meeting at expert level to consider modalities for future interaction and cooperation between the UN and regional organizations in the field of conflict prevention. A list of possible measures was identified:

- better coordination and consultations among regional organizations, and between regional organizations and the United Nations, both at headquarters level and in the field;
- better flows of information through systematic mechanisms among regional organizations and between the latter and the UN (including electronic communications);
- exchange of liaison officers ;
- exchange of lists of staff officers by country/region and functional areas;
- visits of staff at working level between the different headquarters;
- joint training of staff in the field of early warning and preventive action;
- joint expert meetings on specific areas of early warning and prevention;
- establishment of repertoires of best practices and lessons learned in the area of early warning and prevention;
- development of common indicators for early warning;
- establishment of a database of the conflict prevention capabilities of the UN and regional organizations;
- build specific links to civil society (including the media and professional groups) to increase awareness of the value of prevention;
- mobilization of effective resources for early warning and preventive activities.

On 10-11 December, the United Nations will host in New York a follow-up meeting

at the working level between relevant Secretariat staffs of the participating organizations to explore the above list in greater depth, with the hope of developing practical and implementable modalities for more effective cooperation in the field of conflict prevention.

Within Europe, a mechanism for coordination and consultation between the United Nations and regional structures already exists which, in my view, might serve as a model for interaction between the UN and organizations elsewhere in the world. In July 1993, a process of informal, tripartite consultations was initiated between the Geneva-based UN bodies, the then CSCE and the Council of Europe. These consultations, which focused initially on humanitarian emergencies (e.g. in the former Yugoslavia and the Caucasus), have in recent years begun to address a broader range of issues such as good governance and post-conflict rehabilitation and development. The number of participating UN bodies has increased and others, such as the International Committee for the Red Cross and the International Organization for Migration, are today closely affiliated with the process. The chair rotates annually between the UN, OSCE and the Council of Europe, with the latter currently presiding. Above all, these consultations are aimed at sharing information, improving coordination, avoiding duplication and optimizing the utilization of scarce resources. There is an annual "high-level" meeting, the most recent of which was chaired by the OSCE in Geneva in January 1998. The Council of Europe will convene the next such gathering in Strasbourg early next year.

A useful mechanism that has emerged from the tripartite process are "target-oriented" meetings, which bring together experts from the diverse organizations to discuss specific issues. A meeting on Albania was organized in April by the Council of Europe. It has also

become customary to hold at least one meeting annually of information technology experts from the tripartite organizations to explore areas of cooperation in the field of electronic information exchange. It was agreed at the last high-level meeting that an operations database would be set up to better coordinate activities and exchange information. A pilot project on activities in the Caucasus was established earlier this year, with inputs from most participating organizations.

In connection with Albania, I should note that I was just in Tirana, where I attended a national conference on human rights organized by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The event -- which took place on the eve of the national referendum to adopt a constitution -- was significant not only for the importance it attached to the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the implementation in Albania of international human rights instruments, but more broadly as a symbol of the arduous task of building democratic institutions in countries in transition. I had the opportunity to meet with several of your OSCE colleagues, and wish to convey through you to them my gratitude for their advice on diverse aspects of my visit and meetings with the country's leaders. The division of labour between UN and European regional arrangements regarding the situation in Albania, where the OSCE has taken the political lead and provides the coordinating framework for other international organizations, offers an excellent example of the complementary roles our institutions may play. It is important, however, that representatives of the international community based there should be seen by the population to be acting in concert in support of our mutual objectives. Care should be taken not to permit parties or factions to play our organizations against each other.

Whereas much (if not most) UN-OSCE interaction takes place in the field -- in Bosnia, Croatia, Georgia, and Tajikistan, to name just a few -- it is important that there be a continuous flow of information between policymakers as well as experts within our Secretariats and governing bodies. Effective, on-the-ground integration strategies will only succeed with the full backing of our headquarters (whether in New York, Geneva or Vienna) and, for his part, Secretary-General Kofi Annan is making every effort to ensure effective coordination and consultation among the executive heads of UN programmes and departments so as to facilitate the network of inter-organizational field activities, and to help overcome practical difficulties as they arise.

I cannot conclude my remarks without a reference to Kosovo, an area which, I know, is uppermost in your minds as you proceed with the deployment of the Kosovo Verification Mission. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1203, you may count on the backing of the United Nations as a whole, as well as its lead role to be played by UN bodies in the humanitarian and human rights fields.

The UN values highly its expanding web of relations with regional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security, arrangements which were envisaged by its founders when drafting the Charter nearly five and a half decades ago. In today's international arena such contacts are not only desirable, they are essential. Further elaboration of modalities to enhance cooperation between the world's sole global organization and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (which geographically spans

almost the entire hemisphere, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, from Murmansk to Malta, and Dublin to Dushanbe) is essential — not only to alleviate human suffering in areas of crisis but to promote our shared commitment to democracy and social and economic progress. The challenges of our era -- globalization, dramatic advances in information technology -- require that new international and regional strategies be conceived and implemented. We must also make optimal use of our scarce resources. The United Nations will deepen its engagement in support of a better division of labor and improved complementarity among all our partner institutions. As Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, who had the honour to be present at the Helsinki Final Act, I am and will remain committed to the strengthening of our relationship with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, for the common cause of our organizations.

Thank you for your attention.