



Concept Note

Draft 5.04.2023

CENTRAL ASIA REGIONAL SEMINAR

THE ROLE OF NEUTRAL STATES IN STRENGTHENING SECURITY, STABILITY AND DIALOGUE IN THE OSCE AREA

Tuesday, 16 May 2023, 10:00 – 17:30

In-person, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Call for Action – Helsinki +50 Process

BACKGROUND

Neutral and non-aligned countries have traditionally played a critical role in the CSCE/OSCE since its inception. Switzerland hosted the preparatory consultations in Geneva and the Final Act was adopted in Helsinki. Subsequent meetings and conferences were held, among others, in Belgrade, Stockholm, Vienna and La Valletta. As the members of the opposing alliances struggled to find common ground, neutral countries became important dialogue facilitators and brokers. Yet, as the European and Eurasian security architectures evolved in the last decade of the 20th and in the beginning of the 21st century, geopolitics returned to dominate the international scene and the space for neutrality began to shrink. But does this mean that neutrality is less relevant or important today in the OSCE space compared to half a century ago? To what extent does this concept apply to the OSCE Central Asian region? How should Central Asian OSCE member position themselves to play a useful role to contribute addressing the very serious challenges that have dramatically emerged in the last few years?

This Call for Action - Helsinki +50 Regional Seminar will help answer these fundamental questions. It will include an opening segment, two main working sessions and a final segment aimed at identifying the main conclusions. Representatives of countries of the region, members of the OSCE PA Bureau and selected international experts from OSCE countries will be invited to attend.

The opening segment will serve to set the scene, by focusing on the role of the Parliaments and introducing the specific experience of the host country, also with a view to contributing to regional collaboration and, ultimately, stability.

The first working session will be devoted to discussing the importance of neutral dialogue, focusing on past experiences, existing models, lessons learned and the impact of the OSCE. The panelists will be encouraged to share their observations and recommendations based on individual national experiences, engaging participants in a discussion on the added value of a neutral space for the revitalization of dialogue and on the importance of this space for interparliamentary debate and collaboration. This debate will also provide an opportunity to

reflect on the improving levels of regional cooperation among OSCE Central Asian countries (and Mongolia) and on how this positive cooperation process can be of benefit to the whole organization.

The second working session will be more forward-looking, focusing on the possible role of regional processes as well as individual Central Asian countries (and Mongolia) in helping overcome the current deep crisis of multilateralism and the risk of a protracted stalemate in the OSCE. As the violation of key OSCE principles and commitments resulting in open war in the heart of Europa has severely limited the ability of the OSCE to serve as a collaborative platform, is there still a space for individual players within the Organization to undertake initiatives to alleviate the impact of the conflict and, over time, to try and promote initiatives to restore adherence to the basic principles embodied in the Helsinki Final Act? Should this “honest broker” role be recognized and better supported in the interest of restoring security conditions that would benefit all? How can the Network of OSCE Young Parliamentarians contribute a long-term perspective about the role of neutrality in a divided Europe in a longer-term perspective?

The final segment will help identify the main conclusions and recommendations from panelists and participants. A written report will be issued after the event, as a contribution to the PA reflections towards the 50th Anniversary of the Final Act.

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Central Asia Regional Seminar on the Role of Neutral States in Strengthening Security, Stability and Dialogue in the OSCE Area

In-person/Tuesday, 16 May 2023, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Call for Action-Helsinki +50 Initiative

15 May, Monday

Arrival of Participants

16 May, Tuesday

Venue: Yyldyz Hotel -Bagtyyarlyk Avenue 17, Ashgabat

10.00-10.30 **Opening Session**

10.30-11.10 *Coffee Break*

11.00-13.15 **Importance of neutral space in a polarized geopolitical context: the role of OSCE Central Asian countries**

13.15-14.45 *Lunch*

14.45-17.00 **The role of Central Asia countries and Mongolia in helping overcoming crisis of multilateralism and the risk of a protracted stalemate in the OSCE**

17.00-17.30 **Closing Session**

17 May, Wednesday

Departure of Participants