

In order to provide administrative support for these consultations, the CSCE has established a Secretariat in Prague. In addition, they have created a Conflict Prevention Centre in Vienna to assist the Council in reducing the risk of conflict. The final two bodies created were the Office of Free Elections established in Warsaw and the CSCE Parliamentary Assembly involving Members of Parliament from all participating states in an effort to establish further levels of contact.⁷

As the European transition continued with the disintegration of the Soviet Union (resulting in the formation of a number of new states including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan), a new era of instability and insecurity emerged. Economic decline, social tension, aggressive nationalism, intolerance, xenophobia and ethnic conflicts began to threaten stability in the CSCE area. Gross violations of CSCE commitments in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including those related to national minorities began to pose a special threat to the peaceful development of societies, particularly in new democracies.

In response to these developments the CSCE produced the Prague Document (January 1992) and the Helsinki Document (July 1992). The combination of these documents put into place a comprehensive programme of coordinated action which will provide additional tools for the CSCE to address tensions before violence erupts and to manage crises which may develop.

The Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) will now prepare Review Conferences which will precede the meetings of the Heads of State. They will review the entire range of activities within the CSCE, including a thorough implementation of debate, and consider further steps to strengthen the CSCE process as well as preparing a decision-oriented document to be adopted at the meeting.⁸

The CSO will also have overall responsibility for managing crisis. In this regard, it can set up a framework for negotiated settlement, dispatch rapporteur or fact-finding missions or initiate good offices, mediation or conciliation. As well CSCE peacekeeping activities could be used to supervise and help maintain cease-fires, to monitor troop withdrawals, to support the maintenance of law and order, to provide humanitarian and medical aid and to assist refugees. This peacekeeping will take place within the framework of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.⁹

⁷ Ibid., pg. 22.

⁸ CSCE Helsinki Document 1992 Challenges and Change. pg. 1.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 18-19.