

During and after the 1990 Paris Summit, OSCE members renewed their commitment to the Helsinki principles and followup undertakings. In particular, they took practical steps that underlined the vital link between the human dimension and regional stability and progress. As well, they instituted a biennial review process with formal participation by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The 1990 Paris Summit established the Office for Free Elections, in Warsaw. Two years later, at the Helsinki Summit, the office's mandate was expanded to focus on democratization, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms. This brought a name change to Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. The 1992 Helsinki Summit also created the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, in consideration of the fact that ethnic and nationalist tensions are at the root of most conflicts in countries of the former Soviet Union.

With a combined staff of about 40, the two offices have contributed to co-ordinating national and regional elections, constitution building, legislative reform, freedom of the press, and preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution.

Human dimension issues are an integral part of the mandate of OSCE field missions in 10 countries. The missions are required to provide input on human dimension issues to the OSCE Permanent Council for political consideration.