

The CSCE faced and apparently failed its first test on conflict management with the war in Yugoslavia. Emergency sessions on the Yugoslav crisis were held in July and August 1991 but the CSCE was unable to generate enough political will to take significant action on the issue (see Yugoslavia and its Former Republics).

On 30-31 January 1992, the CSCE held the second meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Prague. This meeting marked the beginning of a new high-level debate within the CSCE about how to deal with the implications of the end of communism by moving beyond the institutions established by the Charter of Paris to establish additional mechanisms for dealing with conflict prevention and conflict resolution, as well as measures aimed at strengthening existing CSCE institutions.

Specifically, they agreed to modify the rule of consensus in instances where there were clear, gross violations of the principles of the CSCE by a member state. This would permit decision-making in a situation such as Yugoslavia by allowing a vote on an issue without the consent of the state in question. The Ministers also gave the CSCE the ability to send fact-finding and conciliation missions to areas of tension, as well as missions to monitor human rights situations in member states. The Office of Free Elections was given an expanded list of functions and renamed the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. The ministers moved quickly to use the new mechanisms by approving a fact-finding mission to the Nagorno-Karabakh area in Armenia and a human rights mission to Eastern Europe and some of the former republics of the Soviet Union.

One of the first actions of the Foreign Ministers was to accept Armenia, Azerbaijan, Byelarus, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine as new members, bringing the member total to 48. Croatia and Slovenia were given temporary observer status because Yugoslavia refused to agree to full membership.

A fourth CSCE review conference opened in Helsinki on 24 March 1992. The purpose of the three-month conference, concluding with a summit meeting in July, was to develop a blueprint for a new collective security agenda which might eventually transform the CSCE into the primary guarantor of security in the post-Cold War Europe. At the opening of this meeting Croatia, Slovenia and Georgia were given full membership bringing the grand total to 51 members.