

## **Plenary I: “Expanding and Enhancing the Partnerships: Further Steps after Istanbul”**

**Moderator:** Professor, Dr. Otmar Höll, Director, Austrian Institute for International Affairs, Vienna

### **Presenters:**

Dr. Werner Fasslabend, former Austrian Minister of Defense  
Dr. Erhard Busek, Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

### *Overview*

In the opening plenary, the theme of the conference itself, “expanding and enhancing the partnerships,” was appropriately illustrated with several contemporary examples. Dr. Werner Fasslabend shared his thoughts from a recent conference on international security regarding the challenges that NATO military commanders are facing in the absence of political preparedness or unanimity. He went on to suggest that, despite these challenges, the prospects for traditional cooperative organizations such as NATO and the PfP were good due to the difficulties that some of the newer cooperative structures, such as the EU, are currently experiencing. Dr. Erhard Busek highlighted the critical importance of the region of South Eastern Europe to the security and stability of the entire continent. He outlined some of the critical progress made in the region, pointing to the promising developments in the assumption of responsibility and participation in cooperative frameworks by the nations in the region. He further suggested some of the specific steps that are necessary for these nations to take in the area of security sector reform.

**Moderation: Professor, Dr. Otmar Höll, Director, Austrian Institute for International Affairs, Vienna**

*Before introducing the speakers, Dr. Höll highlighted some facts about Austria's membership in PfP.*

Austria's commitment to the Partnership for Peace is of long standing, as is illustrated by the following:

- Austria became a member in 1995, and is celebrating their tenth anniversary of participation in Partnership for Peace. This includes joint work in peace-keeping missions, humanitarian and disaster relief, and search and rescue operations. Austria took part in the NATO-led peace operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina (IFOR / SFOR) from 1995 until their end last December.
- Austrian troops have participated in the KFOR operation in Kosovo since the autumn of 1999. Austria has reinforced its contingents deployed with both SFOR (up to 150 troops) and KFOR (up to 600 troops). Since 2003, Austrian soldiers have been deployed in Afghanistan, and recently the Austrian government has agreed to deploy Austrian soldiers during the elections in Afghanistan from July until October. Since 1997, Austria has also agreed to cooperate in the framework of "PfP-Plus" for the whole spectrum of peace support operations, including peace enforcement through combat missions (in alignment with the EU-Petersberg spectrum, which includes interoperability and transformation of capacities and strategies).
- Austria is involved in the European Partnership Council (EAPC), PfP's political consultation forum. On a bilateral basis, Austria has intensified also its

talks and cooperation with NATO in all other relevant areas.

It was at last year's Istanbul summit that primary emphasis was given to NATO's transformation to meet the major security threats of today; that is, to fight against international terrorism, stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and address the issue of failed states, which can cause widespread regional instability (such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo). These are areas of deep concern that extend significantly beyond NATO's traditional areas of operation in previous periods.

In the view of some NATO representatives, the Balkan region is where NATO and its partners first learned to work together effectively, which partially explains NATO's high level of commitment to that region. In Istanbul it was agreed to conclude SFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina, because of the improved situation there, and the EU took over security operations there in December 2004.

While the EU has become more or less NATO's most important institutional partner, cooperation with individual partner countries—especially within the principal mechanisms of PfP and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council—ranks very high with NATO. Austria is playing an important role, especially in our close neighborhood, the South Eastern European region.

### **Dr. Werner Fasslabend, former Austrian Minister of Defense**

*Dr. Werner Fasslabend recently returned from a high-level conference on international security in which the participants addressed the problems and the future of NATO, based upon observations from current participants in NATO operations. His comments were focused on questions posed at the conference.*

So what are the problems facing NATO? First, we still have a problem in **intelligence**, because every state produces its own intelligence, which it is reluctant to share. Thus it is very difficult for the commander of combined forces to get the best information he needs.

The second problem is **national caveats**. Cooperation between different nations with different standards generally works out very well. The biggest problem, however, is the caveats that are imposed, because every country has different standards: each nation says, "I can go so far, but I cannot do this, and my soldiers are not allowed to do this," and each nation's tolerance is different. So if you have a mission with fifteen countries, and you have fifteen caveats, then of course this is problematic. We should not only think of problems on the national level, both in our parliamentary and our public discussions, but also of the problems that will face future commander in assembling an efficient mission.

The third problem is **financing**. For example, General Back reported in Afghanistan they have a limited number of helicopters, because everybody tries to send deployments of troops that will not cost too much. In most cases, there is no additional money for the defense ministers to allocate to such missions, and therefore everybody tries to keep his own expenditures to a minimum.

The fourth problem is the **efficiency gap** between the U.S. and Europe. It seems that it becomes wider almost every day. And of course this is not something anybody can resolve in international conferences, because every country has to decide for itself. We need to address this efficiency gap, because otherwise we will not be able to maintain the level of efficiency of international missions the way we did in the past.

The fifth problem is the lack of a **doctrine for missions**. The Americans have a very clear military doctrine. The Europeans do have the Solana paper, which was viewed as a big step forward when it was produced, but of course it is not very specific. This will always be the problem in Europe: papers,

especially political papers, cannot be very specific. If you want to formulate a paper out of the input of twenty-five different states, you will not be very successful in specific terms. And therefore I think it probably should be a necessity within NATO and within PfP to formulate some form of doctrinal goals. Pragmatism is much more important in such a case than is the formal decision on a paper.

A related problem is the difference between the military goals, on the one hand, and the political goals on the other. Our armies should be ready to send troops within five days to any place in the world. But the world of politics reacts far slower. Politicians often expect the military to be prepared for a mission when they themselves are not. There are hardly any political preparations that are made in the field of procedures, issues, goals, or measures. The efficiency of a mission will depend very much on the preparation in the political field, which is much more difficult.

What are the prospects for NATO? What are the prospects for Partnership for Peace in the future? The prospects are quite good. Quite good in the sense that this organization will become more necessary. Why? Because the EU is in crisis. If you look at the political constellation of the most important powers, the Europeans say, well, the Americans obviously know what they want to do—they had their elections not so long ago. They have smoothly functioning administration, and they have their lessons learned from their last missions, such as Iraq.

In Europe, however, they are presented with a scenario in which Germany and France certainly will be occupied with their own problems for at least six months or a year. So there will not be many significant initiatives that come from either Germany or France on the international stage within the next year, because both of them have sizeable internal problems that must be addressed. In particular, their respective domestic job markets will have their absolute highest priority.

From the point of view of politics, most security problems cannot be resolved by just one country. Everybody has

learned that. If we look at “hot spots” all over the world, you will see that there will be a significant need to act together politically in Palestine, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and in many other places. If there is a need, but there is no specific national initiative, then the organizations that presently exist and function well will be the frontrunners. This means NATO and Partnership for Peace. The difference between membership and partnership will not be as important as it used to be in the past, because the crucial element is not so much decision-making; rather, readiness and willingness to take part and cooperate have become much more important. The presence of a coalition of the willing within the organizations will become much more salient than in the past.

Resolving problems will be a task in the future for North America (the U.S. and Canada) and for the EU; all the questions posed by conditions in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and also Central Asia and the Caucasus, as well as Africa, are of substantial importance for the Europeans. In addition, there will be a third pillar: the neighbors. That is, the people in the countries that are involved; if they are not taken into account, you will not be really able to resolve the problems that exist in their state or region, because you need their information, you need their backing, and you need local cooperation very badly. This is especially the case because the big institutions, even those such as NATO, do have difficulties with logistics, and also areas such as civil society, etc. Help and cooperation on the local level will become much more important. With the general strategy being to operate more broadly, widening the membership of NATO and the Partnership for Peace goes absolutely in the right direction. It is not just the question of having specifically defined roles and memberships, but the idea of being bound to work together, trying to develop the same standards within the Partnership for Peace and within NATO. It also makes sense to broaden the possibility of trying to help other countries to achieve similar or the same standards. This is not only a question of cooperating within certain

missions, but it is also the learning process, the process of gaining valuable knowledge from each other in the cooperation and preparation process.

In conclusion, a great deal is being done already in the military arena. But a great deal remains to be done in the political arena. Only if we work together—and much better than we used to—will we be able to resolve the problems we want to resolve. And the problems will not become fewer in number, and they will not become smaller. We have significant problems to resolve, and we should not hesitate to try to do it together. Prospects for the future are good.

### **Dr. Erhard Busek, Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe**

*Dr. Busek explained that, in five years, the Stability Pact has successfully moved from staging ad hoc interventions to displaying a consistent regional approach to strengthen stability and foster European and Euro-Atlantic integration in the region of South Eastern Europe. This approach has generated progress and supported regionally coordinated reform efforts in critical areas.*

Sometimes, we forget the history of the region, a region where we've had four recent wars and a fundamentally changed geopolitical map. Today, six or seven years after this period of war, we have an outstandingly good situation. Stability in the region is still certainly very much dependent on the presence of military forces in the region. We remember fondly the good work done by SFOR and KFOR, and by foreign forces in Macedonia. The number of troops deployed in the area is coming down, and the force is becoming more European in makeup, which is particularly worthy of note because it is connected with the enlarged role of the European Union.

On the other hand, Dr. Fasslabend rightly mentioned that the EU is currently in a state of crisis. While politicians and the

media may make it seem like we're in constant crisis, I believe that this current situation is one that we need to get through and solve. Although the set of problems that we are facing seems like a substantial one, I believe that in the long term, it may prove to be beneficial.

Regarding South Eastern Europe, the EU has many reasons to remain heavily engaged: call it stabilization, call it enlargement, but whatever you call it, engagement is unavoidable. Perhaps the greatest difficulties associated with our job here are explaining it to the public. I believe that the public is not informed about what we are trying to achieve in the region. Is it stability? Is it peace? Is it enlargement?

What we all have to realize is that the situation in SEE is *our* problem. The border of Croatia is only twenty-seven kilometers from Austria. They are our neighbor, and what is going on there should be important to us. Another example is that the distance from Vienna to the Swiss border is farther than the distance from Vienna to Ukraine. This has to be explained to all of the Europeans, because it is a situation that we all share.

A promising—indeed, an essential—development is the region's growing willingness to assume ownership of regional cooperation. This can be seen in the increasing role of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECF), including regular meetings of the respective ministers of defense.

2005 will be a year of important challenges and particular opportunities in South Eastern Europe. Obviously, the question of Kosovo's future status is the most prominent one. But due to the inter-related nature of the problems in the region, close attention will have to be paid to effects on other parts of the region. Political developments in Serbia and Montenegro as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina in the run-up to important referenda and elections—which will take place, at the latest, in early 2006—will have implications for the region as a whole.

The opening of EU accession negotiations with Croatia was delayed since the EU member states judged that Croatia is not cooperating sufficiently with the International Criminal

Tribunal in The Hague. The question of Macedonia's application for EU membership is of importance not just to the country itself, but also to the whole region, since it will give further indications on how the process of integrating South Eastern Europe into the broader European community will proceed.

Although the accession of Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Partnership for Peace (PfP) will not be possible if the war criminals that are being sought are not extradited to ICTY, NATO is assisting the countries by including them in selected PfP activities. As was underlined at the NATO Summit at Istanbul last year, "each country will be judged on its own merits on the road to PfP."

The topics that bring us together are of special importance for the Stability Pact. The first sentence of the background paper for the conference says that, "over the past decade, the changing nature of global security challenges and the structures to deal with them have been far-reaching and rapid." This "reality" could be fully applied in the Balkan region.

We have observed that military establishments in South Eastern Europe were and still are in the process of being restructured as a consequence of the changed security environment. Traditional security concepts have become outdated because of changes in regional and international relations. Conflict in Europe is unlikely, although the complex political and strategic situation in South Eastern Europe could still negatively affect stability and security in the region.

But there is no reason to expect that there will be again a war. We should not expect that any of the nations in this region would want to turn back from democracy, but we should acknowledge that there are still some volatile situations, and that the changed security environment is playing an important role.

Moreover, terrorist activities, organized crime, and ethnic intolerance unfortunately continue to hamper the consolidation of peace and security in the region. The countries of South Eastern Europe are developing new strategic security concepts

based on participation in collective security measures, and based on Euro-Atlantic integration and cooperation with international organizations and institutions.

These are the “strategic” reasons why South Eastern Europe should not be forgotten. Our job in the region is not yet finished. We have to look to finish it in the sense that we are coming to an end of some activities and, on the other hand, the countries of the region are taking regional leadership in addressing their own questions. That is the crucially important change that must influence our approach to the region.

NATO and the EU share a common vision of the future, in particular in the Western Balkans—i.e., self-sustaining stability based on democratic and effective government structures and a viable free-market economy. Without any doubt, this joint vision and determination helps to bring about further rapprochement with European and Euro-Atlantic structures, which is also the central objective of the Stability Pact.

Without wanting to play one off against the other, the European as well as the trans-Atlantic perspective of South Eastern Europe is clear and important for Europe. Therefore, I am convinced that the stabilization and association process, the Partnership for Peace, and the Membership Action Plan still remain the central and most valuable instruments available to help facilitate these integration processes.

There are different approaches that are being taken by the EU and our trans-Atlantic partner, namely the U.S. For us Europeans, achieving stability in South Eastern Europe is part of the wider development process of Europe. Because nations in the region are our neighbors, there is a lot of migration, organized crime, and trafficking of human beings. Seen from the U.S. perspective, the situation in South Eastern Europe is primarily a question of stability in other regions, like the Middle East, Central Asia, etc., as well as for the foreign troops deployed in the area.

The U.S. is doing a great deal in terms of fighting organized crime, and is trying to establish a network in this

regard in Central Asia and in the Black Sea region, because, for example, the international traffic in drugs starts from Afghanistan and elsewhere in the region. Trafficked human beings are now starting to come from Moldova, and extending far to the east. South Eastern Europe is not the only transit region for this trade, but it is significant. We need close cooperation to fight these operations, because the money collected to support terrorism comes out of this criminal activity. Here you have clear connections, and therefore we have a common aim that grows out of our different approaches.

When touching upon the security aspects, I would say that, after the challenging years of the 1990s, the Western Balkans are in a good position to improve security in the region. The most important step to be taken is the comprehensive reform of national security sectors, which requires the fundamental transformation of the inherited armed forces, and the implementation of democratic civil control and public oversight of the entire security sector.

Security sector reform (SSR) is currently being prepared or is being implemented in most countries of South Eastern Europe. You know perhaps better than I do that SSR is a multi-faceted subject area, with many recent steps forward having been taken, but also with many remaining challenges, where regional and other types of international cooperation are necessary. SSR should be understood as an integrated process involving the governments, the militaries (as a part of building defense institutions), and the parliaments. This process is indeed, to a very large extent, an economic and social issue and, accordingly, also needs to be dealt within the context of economic reconstruction and social development policies.

The key questions here are how to restructure and downsize the military forces and the military-related sector, adapting them not only to the new security situation, but also to the current economic realities of the region. Therefore, taking measures to cushion the economic and social consequences of major reductions in the armed forces and military infrastructure

are of the utmost importance. To achieve progress and tangible results in SSR, the political will to introduce the necessary reforms is crucial, and will be needed on a long-term basis.

So far, we've created internal parliamentary cooperation; we are investing a lot of time and money to bring the parliaments together in a kind of a learning process. The work that we are doing with staff of the parliamentarians is also important, because I think that we have to look to the fact that the parliaments are new, and the parliamentarians themselves are even newer, because of ongoing elections, and therefore it is necessary to have thorough training in parliamentary practice. Regional cooperation and initiatives—such as exchanging best practices and lessons learned among the relevant actors, as well as financial support by the international community—should help to strengthen the political momentum to overcome existing internal obstacles to such reforms.

The reintegration of former military personnel, the conversion of former military bases, and the restructuring of military industries by conversion of redundant military facilities to civilian purposes represent one of the key SSR priorities for 2005. In other words, we are constantly stressing the importance of defense conversion, since the issue is very often neglected or underestimated.

There are several reasons why we should remain active here. First of all, it should be emphasized that defense conversion is part of the overall process of security sector reform in South Eastern Europe, which, of course, has to be seen in the context of these nations' integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

Second, defense conversion represents a very serious challenge, because of its scope and volume: tens of thousands redundant military personnel have already been released from the service or will be released in the near future. Thousands of military bases/sites have to be closed. The defense industry sector faces very serious challenges. In addition, large quantities of obsolete and often unstable ammunition and explosives

(including chemical munitions in some countries), as well as redundant military weapons, should be destroyed, while taking into account the environmental implications. All these aspects have to be properly addressed.

Third, the assumption that defense conversion is mainly a military issue must be corrected. 90 percent of these issues revolve primarily around economic and social issues and, accordingly, they need to be dealt within the context of economic reconstruction and social development policies. To be frank, this quite often is not properly understood. We are not dealing with military/defense reforms as such, but we are focusing on the economic and social consequences of major reductions in armed forces and military infrastructure. And, of equal importance, we are also focusing on how to use the enormous human and material potential previously dedicated to these military ends for civil purposes.

This should also be a part of a new “security culture” in the countries concerned. Since it’s evident that links between security and development exist, an integrated approach is essential, in particular involving cooperation and coordination among the ministries responsible for defense, development, social and employment affairs, finance, etc., as well as between the government and parliament. We cannot move forward without the support of our international partners—chief among them NATO, bilateral donors, and international financial institutions. We are grateful to all our partners for their expertise, their commitment, and their support.

Defense conversion is also directly linked with the redirection of military research and development. This is exactly the role that defense academies and security studies institutes should be playing. Experts from the Czech University of Defense in Brno as well as from the U.K. Defense Academy have already started to participate actively in our defense conversion meetings and other events.

In conclusion, when dealing with security sector reform, one can also talk about issues such as human security, including

combating the excessive and uncontrolled flow of small arms and light weapons, border security and management, fighting against organized crime and corruption, and disaster prevention and preparedness. Through its initiatives and task forces, the Stability Pact works closely with the countries of the region to tackle these issues. We are also open to communication with others who might also be interested in these areas. They should do so, because ensuring stability in South Eastern Europe is a common European responsibility.