The members of OSCE today include 54 European countries the successor states of the former Soviet Union, the United States and Canada. It is thus the only forum for pan-European cooperation. The Charter of Paris marked the OSCE's entry into a new phase following the end of East-West confrontation. The participating states are committed to human rights, democracy, the rule oi law. economic freed"-, social justice and European unity. They have thus obligated themselves to observing high common values in their dealings with one another and in their treatment of their citizens.

The OSCE has become an active organization, which can and does assume political responsibilities . These include early-warning arrangements, conflict prevention, crisis management, peacekeeping measures and the peaceful settlement of conflicts. Long-term conflict prevention and advisory missions of the OSCE have taken up their work in a number of states. To ensure continuous monitoring of OSCE standards, regular meetings are held at which the human rights situation in member countries is critically examined and publicly discussed.

The OSCE has created wide-ranging obligations in the field of human rights. Although not legally binding, they are of a very mandatory nature politically. The High Commissioner for National Minorities identifies potential ethnic tensions at the earliest possible time and helps to contain and reduce them through direct consultations with the affected parties .

The OSCE will continue to serve as a forum for dialogue, negotiation and cooperation in order to give fresh stimulus to the process of arms control, disarmament and confidence- and security-building, as well as to the reduction of the risk of conflict.

The OSCE remains the roof under which the 54 participating states seek to agree on mechanisms for peaceful resolution of conflicts, on norms for safeguarding human rights and the rights of minorities, and on the rules governing cooperation between equal partner states.