

Charter of Paris for a New Europe

Adoption: Signature of the Charter on November 21st, 1990.

Entry into force: Not legally binding, does not have treaty status.

Number of signatories and ratifications: The Charter of Paris for a New Europe was signed by 34 States, mostly European countries, as well as Canada and the United States.

Canada's commitments: Canada has signed the Charter of Paris.

Summary information

The Charter of Paris for a New Europe, also called Paris Charter, was agreed upon at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe on November 21, 1990 in Paris with the participation of 34 States, mainly European as well as Canada, the United States, and the Soviet Union. At its core, the Charter of Paris seeks to recognize the “new era of democracy, peace, and unity” that is represented by the end of the cold war period. Inspired by the ten principles of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe seeks to promote shared values among signatory members in regards to human rights, democracy, economic liberty and responsibility, solidarity, security, and friendly relations among participating States.

History

The Charter of Paris for a New Europe can trace back its history from the early 1970s with the creation of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) where States were invited to discuss and negotiate various measures towards peace between East and West. The signature of the Helsinki Final Act in August 1975 is perceived as the founding document of the CSCE, which laid down the ten fundamental principles relating to security, economic, environmental, and human rights issues for all signatory members. The Paris Charter was drafted as a re-commitment to the values and principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

With the changing political landscape represented by the end of the Cold War, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe was adopted in November 1990 to acknowledge the historic change happening in Europe and, through institutionalization, to respond to the new challenges of the post-Cold War period. It marked the turning point for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in terms of its changing structure, from a “forum for negotiation and dialogue to an active operational structure”.

Key Provisions

The Paris Charter draws its objectives from the foundations of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, which laid down the defining principles for improved international relations contributing to Europe's peace, security, justice and cooperation. Honoring the legacy of

the Helsinki Final Act, the Paris Charter reaffirms the end of the “era of confrontation and division of Europe” and the commitment to respectful and cooperative relations between signatory countries.

The Charter emphasizes the importance of shared values for all signatory members concerning human rights, political freedoms and economic development. More specifically, the Paris Charter includes new “Guidelines for the Future”, which are divided in eight themes.

- 1) The first guideline emphasizes the irrevocability of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which relate to **human dimension** provisions, such as strengthening democratic institutions, fostering the contribution of national minorities to society, and combating racial, social, and religious discrimination.
- 2) Within the second guideline, the signatory members affirmed that “although the threat of conflict in Europe has diminished, other dangers threaten the stability of our societies”. **Security** is thus an essential provision of the Paris Charter in order to ensure the protection of the “independence, sovereign equality or territorial integrity of the participating States”.
- 3) **Economic Cooperation** based on market economy is essential to create a united Europe. The Charter also emphasizes the importance of promoting the interests of developing participating states through economic cooperation as part of the overall objective towards democratization and social justice.
- 4) The Paris Charter acknowledges the urgent need to tackle issues related to the **environment**, especially through public awareness and education. It also encourages the use of clean and low-waste technology supported by appropriate legislative and administrative structures.
- 5) The guiding principle of shared values from the Paris Charter should also include the idea of a common European **culture**, which encourages creative freedom and the protection and promotion of cultural and spiritual heritage.
- 6) The rights of **migrant workers** and their families are important since it touches upon various other provisions such as the economic, cultural, social, and human dimensions.
- 7) The Paris Charter proposes to “continue efforts to strengthen security and cooperation in the **Mediterranean** as an important factor of stability in Europe”.
- 8) Finally, the Paris Charter recognizes the important role of **non-governmental organizations**, religious and other groups in the achievement of the objectives of the CSCE.

Canada’s commitments and responsibilities

As part of its commitments towards unity, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe reiterates the primacy of participation and cooperation of both North American and European states to the CSCE in order to promote common action, cooperation and solidarity. As part of the 34 signatory members, Canada has pursued its commitments towards the Charter of Paris, as it did previously with the Helsinki Final Act. Although Canada’s commitments and participation has not been extensively reported, one of its

main responsibilities is to ensure the cost-effectiveness of the CSCE as the seventh biggest financial contributor (5.5 % of the total cost distribution).

International monitoring and implementation

The Charter of Paris established various standing institutions such as the Conflict Prevention Centre in Vienna, the Office for Free Elections in Warsaw, and the Secretariat in Prague. Furthermore, it also created “three main political, consultative bodies: The Council of Minister, consisting of foreign ministers from the participating States; a Committee of Senior Officials to assist the Council and manage day-to-day business; and regular meeting of heads of State or Government”.

The first follow-up meeting was held in Helsinki in 1992. One of the main agenda priorities was to open a “new negotiation on arms control, disarmament, and confidence and security building measures (CSBMs)” with the establishment of the Forum for Security Co-operation.

A Supplementary Document was also adopted at the same time as the Paris Charter, which contains procedural and organizational modalities giving effect to certain provisions within the Charter of Paris such as emergency meetings to address crises similar to what happened in Yugoslavia less than a year after the signing of the Charter of Paris.

From the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 to the Paris Charter in 1990, several conferences were held under the entity of the CSCE, which then led to the creation of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 1995 and is still a functioning entity today with respect to monitoring and mitigating security threats in Europe. In 1999, the Paris Charter was amended to create the Charter for European Society.

References

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