



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Address to the 996th Meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation

Secretary General Helga Schmid

Wednesday 15 December 2021, 11 a.m.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Dear Colleagues,

It is my real **pleasure to address the Forum for Security and Cooperation** today.

Early next year, this OSCE decision making body will mark its 1000th session. We can all be proud of the FSCs contribution to security in the OSCE region and for guiding our efforts in the politico-military dimension.

At the outset, I would like to **thank** the Austrian Chair, dear Florian, for **your excellent stewardship** of the FSC. And I would also like to thank Secretary General Dieter Kandlhofer, of the Federal Ministry of Defence of Austria, for being with us today.

Unfortunately, we could **not come to consensus on any MC decisions**, but this outcome **belies the tenacious effort** of you and your team; hopefully **setting the stage for success on this front in Łódź** next year.

There are **encouraging signs**. I am heartened to hear that **three updated Best Practice Guides on SALW/SCA** appear to be ready for **adoption later today**; a real **success for this final regular sitting of the Austrian FSC Chairmanship**. I hope that participating States will **build on this consensus** going forward.

With the future in mind, I would also like to **convey my best wishes to the incoming Chair from Azerbaijan**. Dear Rovshan, my staff and I **look forward to working with you and supporting your efforts** as you take up the

responsibility for consultation on and co-ordination of the wide range of FSC matters, **on behalf of the participating States.**

Colleagues, it is important that we **overcome the present stalemate** that affects so many areas of our mutual interest. We must build the **political will** necessary to fulfil our wide mandate, reduce tension, and build trust.

Inclusiveness across the OSCE region seeking incorporation of a **wider range of perspectives** can help to find mutually agreeable arms control and CSBM options. Looking **beyond the classic quantitative approach of the arms control architecture, developed in – and for – a different era,** may help us creating **new momentum in the FSC.**

The OSCE has a **long-standing history of the CSBMs** aimed at reducing the risk of miscalculations or incidents involving conventional military forces, including **mechanisms for risk reduction; consultations on unusual military activities; regular verification activities; and observation of military exercises,** to name a few.

With these tools, even while the political climate has led to a deadlock in arms control negotiations, **the Vienna Document contains a robust set of CSBMs.** When implemented **in both letter and spirit,** it can **de-escalate security tensions in Europe.** Fortunately, these verification activities, contact events, and other mechanisms ensure the **ongoing engagement of participating States in building trust and confidence.**

These activities have **proven their value** in fostering an atmosphere of predictability and cooperation. I am therefore pleased to see that **28 participating States have resumed their verification activities.** I commend **all national Verification Centres** for their efforts.

However, as we are also all aware, there are still **many challenges for us in the field of arms control and CSBMs.** This year marked the 25th anniversary of the **OSCE Framework for Arms Control** formulated in Lisbon, encompassing the interlocking web of arms control instruments. Unfortunately, the web is today **under significant strain.**

Over the last years, we have witnessed a **rise in militarization in Europe,** increasing the likelihood of misperceptions, misunderstandings and even military incidents. With the exception of the Vienna Document, there **are precious few arms control arrangements remaining** to reduce these growing risks.

Too often, we have seen **confrontation chosen over pragmatic cooperation**. If our common goal is comprehensive and cooperative security, the main priority must be to seek **options to break this trend**, to **revive conventional arms control**, and to **update our CSBMs** to reflect current realities.

The necessary first and vital steps in such a **process can begin here in the FSC**, if you nurture it and give it space to grow.

During my address to the **Ministerial Council in Stockholm** two weeks ago, I reminded the foreign ministers of the excellent **value for money delivered by the OSCE**. Here in the FSC, participating States also get **significant benefit from a relatively small commitment** on their part.

In 2021, the **CPC continued its support to the FSC in a wide range of areas**.

The knowledge, institutional memory, and expertise provided by Secretariat staff, particularly those in the FSC Support Unit, to the FSC Chairs and delegations often go **unnoticed due to the daily nature of these interventions, permeating all facets of the FSCs work**. Nonetheless, it remains a **key ingredient** to the successful conduct of almost every activity undertaken in this Forum.

You will be aware of some of **the most prominent activities** that benefitted from **direct Secretariat support**, such as the **OSCE High-Level Military Doctrine Seminar**, the **Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting**, and events related to the full and effective implementation of the **Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security**, including one in Stockholm offering insight into ensuring effective participation of women in the armed forces.

The CPC also provided a range of services to participating States in support of other FSC mandates, including support to **non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction** and provision of an excellent framework for the Global Exchange of Military Information and the Annual Exchange of Military Information, via the **OSCE Communications Network**.

Furthering the **Women, Peace and Security Agenda**, the CPC conducted a successful **joint OSCE-UNODA Scholarship programme** on arms control, disarmament, and nonproliferation for young professionals, particularly women.

Last week, the FSC hosted an award ceremony of the OSCE-IFSH **Essay Competition** on “Conventional Arms Control and Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in Europe”, encouraging talented young professionals to engage in pol-mil research.

To increase knowledge, the CPC also developed an **FSC E-Learning Programme**. To date, over 470 participants from 45 participating States have enrolled in this online training.

The CPC continues to support the successful implementation of the **Dayton Sub-regional Arms Control Agreement** and it recently organized the **removal of the last of the rocket fuel component mélange remaining in Kyrgyzstan**.

In the area of small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition, the CPC **supported the review process of Best Practice Guides** and developed a new **SALW/SCA portal**. It also **coordinates the implementation of more than 20 ongoing projects** to prevent SALW proliferation and to reduce SCA risks across the OSCE region.

Success begets success and I would highlight that the **SALW/SCA projects** have **attracted 7 million Euros in extra-budgetary funding in just the past two weeks**, and over 10 million since the last recess – a remarkable testament to how this work is perceived by participating States. In this regard, I would like to thank these donors, including Belgium, France, Germany, the United States and the European Union.

I would also like to **thank all donors** to the wide range of other programmes conducted in support of the Forum for Security Cooperation.

I am proud of these truly impressive contributions of my team to the OSCE first dimension and I trust you in the FSC are equally satisfied with the manner in which the Secretariat is supporting your work.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that I spare no effort in **empowering the CPC`s staff** to support you here and will continue to **exchange regularly with the participating States on pol-mil issues**. Our collective effort must focus on **reinforcing our acquis** in this area, and on **building a better security architecture** for the future.

The **instruments we developed many years ago need to encompass both old but also new** threats to our security. Where they cannot, we must find solutions to adapt and solidify the OSCE's set of security arrangements.

This requires engagement at all levels and with all stakeholders. **I count on each of you to contribute** in your own way. Please rest assured that **I myself, the CPC, in particular the FSC Support Unit, and the whole OSCE Secretariat stand by your side** in this endeavour.

Mr Chairman, allow me to close by **again thanking you and your team** for Austria's able and sage guidance of the work of the FSC over the past four months.

Thank you for your attention.