

FSC Chairmanship: Germany

OSCE Chairmanship: Albania

79th JOINT MEETING OF THE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION AND THE PERMANENT COUNCIL

1. Date: Wednesday, 28 October 2020 (via video teleconference)

Opened: 10.05 a.m.

Closed: 12.35 p.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador G. Bräutigam (FSC) (Germany)
Ambassador I. Hasani (PC) (Albania)

Prior to taking up the agenda, the Chairperson (FSC) reminded the participants of the modalities for the conduct of the meeting in view of the health and safety measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic (FSC-PC.GAL/6/20 OSCE+).

- ### 3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

- Agenda item 1: SECURITY DIALOGUE ON THE STRUCTURED DIALOGUE: REPORT BY THE CHAIR OF THE INFORMAL WORKING GROUP STRUCTURED DIALOGUE**

Chairperson (FSC), Chairperson (PC), Chairperson of the Informal Working Group Structured Dialogue (CIO.GAL/195/20 Restr.), Germany-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Georgia and San Marino, in alignment) (FSC-PC.DEL/52/20), Germany (FSC-PC.DEL/49/20 OSCE+), Slovenia (FSC-PC.DEL/38/20 OSCE+), United Kingdom (FSC-PC.DEL/36/20 OSCE+), Belarus (FSC-PC.DEL/48/20 OSCE+), Turkey (FSC-PC.DEL/46/20 OSCE+) (FSC-PC.DEL/47/20 OSCE+), Poland (FSC-PC.DEL/39/20 OSCE+), United States of America (FSC-PC.DEL/41/20), Georgia (FSC-PC.DEL/50/20 OSCE+), Austria (FSC-PC.DEL/42/20 OSCE+), Canada (FSC-PC.DEL/51/20 OSCE+), Switzerland, Ukraine (FSC-PC.DEL/43/20

OSCE+), Russian Federation (Annex 1) (Annex 2), Latvia (Annex 3), Armenia (FSC-PC.DEL/53/20), Lithuania (FSC-PC.DEL/37/20 OSCE+), Norway (FSC-PC.DEL/35/20), Slovakia, Sweden, Azerbaijan

Agenda item 2: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

4. Next meeting:

To be announced

79th Joint Meeting of the FSC and the PC

FSC-PC Journal No. 66, Agenda item 1

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

Distinguished Co-Chairpersons,

We are grateful for the organization of this joint meeting of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation and the OSCE Permanent Council, which provides an opportunity to take stock of the activities of the Informal Working Group (IWG) on the Structured Dialogue this year. We thank the distinguished Ambassador Luis Cuesta Civís and the highly professional team of the Spanish Chairmanship for their able leadership of the IWG and for preparing a good-quality report on the main areas of discussion. It is symbolic that today's meeting is co-chaired by Germany, which initiated this negotiation process in 2016.

This year has not been an easy one for the Structured Dialogue. Quarantine measures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have greatly restricted initial plans and cut down on the number of scheduled events. Nevertheless, the Spanish Chairmanship has made significant efforts to maintain dialogue, demonstrating a creative and innovative approach under the circumstances.

With the aid of modern remote technologies, substantive discussions have been held on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the politico-military situation and on ways of increasing the transparency of military activities and incident prevention. The OSCE participating States have shared assessments and presented interesting, often conflicting, views on what has been going on. Such discourse is important and useful. We feel that the atmosphere of the meetings has changed to some degree for the better. During the last workshop it became clear how much more productive it is – in contrast to “hybrid” threats – to conduct discussions at the level of military specialists focusing on specific applied issues without politicized assessments.

The results of the meetings once again showed that with the wide diversity of views, a joint effort and a collaborative approach are required to deal with the tasks still facing us. Above all, these include reducing the level of confrontation in Europe and exercising restraint in the military sphere, preventing incidents on and over the high seas, and strengthening stability and trust. It is these thematic blocks that we believe should form the core of the Structured Dialogue.

However, in the opinion of our military department, an analysis of the Structured Dialogue meetings over several years reveals that the discussion of transparency measures in military activities has not yet produced any tangible positive results. Clear signals from our side about the need for de-escalation of the situation, including a reciprocal reduction in military activity along the borders of Russia and NATO countries, and also an improvement in mechanisms for preventing incidents and dangerous military activities, have been ignored. The activity of NATO forces near our borders continues and is even increasing. We have repeatedly provided the relevant details during OSCE politico-military events.

Despite this, at IWG meetings we continue to hear unfounded statements about Russian “aggression”, which cause us either bewilderment or a sense of sad irony. Especially when these statements come, for example, from the representative of a country to which three dozen heavy tanks have been moved from other NATO member countries to conduct exercises 15 km from the neighbouring State. Such activities raise not only legitimate security concerns, but also the question: what is the military reason for conducting such activities in close proximity to the border?

Speaking of transparency, I should like to mention a very important aspect relating to the effective use and objective perception of information provided by OSCE participating States on military training activities. During the year, we have used all available opportunities to inform our partners about our large-scale military activities. These include the snap inspection of the readiness of troops to localize the threatened spread of viral diseases (25 to 28 March) and also the “Caucasus 2020” strategic command and staff exercise (21 to 26 September). As part of our voluntary transparency measures, we transmitted notifications via the OSCE Communications Network, posted detailed information on the official Internet portal of the Ministry of Defence and in the media, and held additional briefings in Moscow and Vienna. In short, the resources have been used to the full.

We cannot hide our surprise that, despite all the measures we have taken, a number of participating States at the Structured Dialogue meetings in June and October complained about the supposed lack of transparency on our part. Unfortunately, they did not specify what other modern technological means must be used in order for this information to reach its goal. How are the criteria for adequacy of the information about exercises and other military activities to be defined? We are still waiting for a reasoned response from our partners. We assume that it will be based on facts, not on a subjective perception of reality.

Of course, when we participate in the Structured Dialogue, we take into account the broader politico-military realities in the Euro-Atlantic region, which are not reassuring at the moment. I would like to remind you that the initiative to suspend military contacts was taken by NATO, which at the same time has deployed many thousands of troops on its eastern borders and continues to conduct provocative military exercises and to practise the tactical deployment of strategic aviation near our State border. The situation is also aggravated by the recently signed Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement between the United States of America and Poland, which provides for an increase in the total number of US forces on Polish territory. We note the potential danger of this step, which could lead to a violation of the 1997 Russia-NATO Founding Act, jeopardizing the existence of this extremely important document.

These examples show that there is a clear gap between NATO's calls for military restraint and the reality of the situation. Under these circumstances, modernization of the Vienna Document 2011 is unacceptable for Russia.

Distinguished Co-Chairpersons,

The Structured Dialogue is entering its fifth year of operation. There has long been a pressing need for practical benefits from this format. It is gratifying to note that today the majority of OSCE participating States have expressed their commitment to the negotiation process and are in favour of its continuation. We share the view that it is still needed in the current environment. The motto of the Spanish Chairmanship of the IWG, "Understanding for Security", is more relevant than ever.

For the time being, we can see that by no means everyone is ready to move on to substantive work together. It is worrying that a number of OSCE participating States are engaging in politicized campaigns against specific countries. This practice deviates from the mandate of the Structured Dialogue set out in the declaration of the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Hamburg (2016) and does not help in creating an environment conducive to "reinvigorating conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures". This was particularly well reflected in the discussions on "hybrid threats". We believe that this is confrontational and has a destructive effect on the development of the process. We confirm that we will not participate in events if "hybrids" are on the IWG agenda.

As Ambassador Cuesta, distinguished Chairperson of the IWG, noted, the Structured Dialogue is a process driven by the participating States. If the partners are prepared on an equal basis not only to discuss but also to actively do something to reduce tension, it would be logical in the coming year to focus on practical, professional and depoliticized work on de-escalation measures, including a reciprocal reduction in military activities along the borders between Russia and NATO countries. By making use of co-operative mechanisms, this would significantly improve the security climate.

We advocate the return of the Structured Dialogue to its roots in the Hamburg mandate. It is important to move away from fruitless discussions and consolidate a positive agenda, focusing the discussion on the formation of a common understanding of military security and stability on the continent.

Thank you for your attention. I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

79th Joint Meeting of the FSC and the PC

FSC-PC Journal No. 66, Agenda item 1

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

Distinguished Co-Chairpersons,

I feel it necessary to respond to the politicized comments by a number of delegations, in particular the delegation of Ukraine, regarding the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol. In that connection, I would like to remind those delegations once again of the well-known proverb: “saying ‘halva’ one hundred times won’t make the taste in your mouth any sweeter.”

The Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol have full status as constituent entities of the Russian Federation. The choice made by the Crimean people to reunite with Russia is completely legitimate. As the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin stated, this issue is not up for discussion and is definitively closed.

We consider the statements by a number of delegations about the situation in Ukraine to be clearly inappropriate in the context of discussion of the results of the Structured Dialogue in 2020. We urge our partners to refrain from attempting to shift the course of our discussions to a politicized level and to stick to the approved agenda. In addition, as some delegations have taken the liberty of making unfriendly comments about my country, I believe it is necessary to state the following.

As a co-mediator for a peaceful settlement, Russia emphasizes the direct responsibility of the Ukrainian Government for the practical implementation of all aspects of the Minsk Package of Measures and the instructions issued at the “Normandy format” summit held in Paris. The Ukrainian Government should put an immediate stop to the punitive operation against the civilian population of Donbas, withdraw its weapons and move them to the designated storage sites, disarm all illegal groups, and pull foreign military equipment and mercenaries out of Ukraine. The inhumane socio-economic blockade of Donbas should be lifted and the region itself granted special status as a matter of urgency. All of Ukraine’s obligations under the Minsk agreements must be fulfilled.

We call on international partners and Ukraine’s external “minders” to bring their influence to bear on the Ukrainian leadership with a view to achieving swift implementation of the provisions of the Package of Measures (endorsed by the United Nations Security

Council) through direct and sustainable dialogue between the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk.

Thank you for your attention. I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

79th Joint Meeting of the FSC and the PC

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STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF LATVIA

Madam Chairperson,
Mr. Chairperson,

Latvia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. However, I should like to add a few points in my national capacity, particularly regarding the Vienna Document and hybrid threats.

Allow me first of all to express my delegation's appreciation to my Spanish colleague Ambassador Luis Cuesta Civís and his team for their efforts to ensure a substantial programme for the Structured Dialogue in the exceptional circumstances we are currently contending with.

We value the Structured Dialogue as a framework for discussions on politico-military aspects of security that are shaping our threat perceptions. The challenging security landscape we are faced with today makes these discussions even more important and relevant than before. It is clear that the current challenges to regional stability and security are not due to a lack of established principles for inter-State behaviour or to the absence of agreements on conventional arms control. Such principles and agreements very much exist, and there is no need to reinvent them.

The Vienna Document is one of the most important instruments in the OSCE's politico-military toolbox. It provides for a broad range of measures aimed at promoting transparency, military predictability and stability, reducing risks and preventing military incidents. Our discussions today and at the meeting of the Informal Working Group on the Structured Dialogue earlier this month justify once again the need for full adherence to the existing commitments and constructive engagement in the process of the Vienna Document modernization. In this context, we reiterate that the joint proposal for modernization of the Vienna Document supported by 34 participating States is the best way forward for enhancing transparency and predictability, reducing risks and preventing incidents.

Discussions on incident prevention and management and the exchange of best practices on risk reduction bring new ideas for increasing trust and confidence among the participating States. Expert-level exchanges and military-to-military contacts could contribute to greater transparency and predictability. However, any new voluntary measures cannot be a substitute for the full implementation in good faith by States of their mandatory commitments.

Latvia is among the many countries that view hybrid threats as a very real and relevant security concern. The topic deserves our attention and is fully coherent with the Hamburg mandate for the Structured Dialogue, given that hybrid threats are a current challenge to security in the OSCE area and have serious implications in a wider politico-military context.

Hybrid threats shape our threat perception which is a crucial element for any meaningful dialogue on trust and confidence to foster security and stability. We believe that breaking the concept of a “hybrid threats” down into specific elements could indeed be useful. However, we have to keep in mind that hybrid threats are a complex security challenge: they encompassing a wide spectrum of military and non-military aspects, and are heavily influenced by broader strategic and political developments. We should remain alert to the comprehensive nature of hybrid threats and ensure that a general discussion on hybrid threats and their security implications should remain on our agenda.

I kindly request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you.