



## **FSC continues to provide a unique platform to address politico-military issues in the OSCE area**

**Closing Remarks by H.E. Mr. Andrej Benedečič, Permanent Representative of Slovenia and Chairperson of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation, on Conclusion of the Slovenian FSC Chairmanship, at the 889<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation, Vienna, 18 July 2018**

*Dear Colleagues,*

This is the last meeting of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation under the Slovenian Chairmanship. I would therefore like to share with you some reflections on our work. Let me underline that Slovenian efforts were aimed first and foremost at restoring confidence and advancing meaningful dialogue among participating States. This objective also influenced the choice of topics that were discussed during the past several months. The high calibre of the resulting exchange of views shows that the FSC continues to provide a unique platform to address politico-military issues in the OSCE area.

We started our Chairmanship by focusing on the important topic of confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) and arms control. I would therefore like to recall the words of Dr. Iztok Prezelj from the University of Ljubljana who said during that discussion that "we need to create a reverse domino effect for trust in Europe". I think it is also important that this Security Dialogue showed how even though the Vienna Document currently faces some serious challenges, it has been surprisingly effective in the past and holds great potential for improvement in the future. I would therefore like to call for the discussions on its modernization to continue, especially in Working Group "A".

As an innovative form of a CSBM the Slovenian Chairmanship also decided to organize a special commemorative session on the centenary of the end of the First World War. That event addressed the origins and consequences of one of the deadliest conflicts Europe has ever witnessed, with a view to possible lessons for the current security context. Its main message was that today, unlike then, multilateral mechanisms are in place that can prevent misperceptions and misunderstandings, with the OSCE being a key one. Another important message, in my view, is that the FSC is made up of consummate professionals. I have to say that you all impressed me with your thoughtful and knowledgeable interventions, which is what I also said publicly at the Annual Security Review Conference.

Among other topics that were addressed were the importance of export controls and deactivation in countering the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons (SALW), also in light of the Third Review Conference on the Programme of Action that was held in New York in June. The OSCE has been a pioneer in promoting collaboration and standards in this field for many years. The Chairmanship also decided to bring more attention to South-Eastern Europe by organizing discussions on regional military cooperation in the Western Balkans and the contribution of KFOR to stability in the region. This was not only because of Slovenia's geographic location, but also due to the fact that it is an area of special importance where the OSCE has almost half of its field presences and NATO its longest-running operation.

The Chairmanship also paid special attention to the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, which is one of the most important normative documents of the OSCE. In addition to the Annual Implementation Discussion on the Code, we therefore also organized a side event, which included a national tables' fair, as well as a special panel discussion on the challenges presented by the phenomenon of Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs). The role of mine action in all phases of the conflict cycle was also highlighted, since the issue is again becoming increasingly topical, with the global number of landmine victims doubling in last years.

A prominent feature of Slovenian FSC Chairmanship was its close cooperation with the Italian OSCE Chairmanship. This was especially evident during the two joint meetings of both decision-making bodies of the Organization, the FSC and the Permanent Council. The first meeting examined the progress achieved in the Structured Dialogue process, while the second one focused on the Mediterranean. As such it showed that Slovenia and Italy are not only neighbouring countries, but also participating States that are acutely aware of the importance of security of the OSCE's southern region. Slovenian and Italian Chairmanships also coordinated in organizing an FSC-related working session in the framework of the Annual Security Review Conference. Together, we also made sure that the important role of the FSC was highlighted in the framework of this year's Ambassadorial Retreat.

As you know, one of the recurring themes of the Slovenian FSC Chairmanship was the role of women in security processes. I believe we have succeeded in mainstreaming a gender perspective in all of our events. We have also managed to observe the panel parity pledge, since 42% of all the speakers at our Security Dialogues were female. This also applies to the discussion that was held in the context of UNSCR 1540 on the topic of nuclear security in the OSCE area. Let me therefore say that if gender can be mainstreamed in nuclear security, it can be mainstreamed anywhere.

I would also like to express great satisfaction with the fact that on the margins of the Security Dialogue that was specifically devoted to UNSCR 1325 and the issue of women, peace and security the webpage of the OSCE MenEngage Network was launched. This is important, because men have a key role to play in promoting gender equality. It was therefore also inspiring that members of the Network performed the documentary play SEVEN on real-life experiences of seven women from around the world on the first day of the Annual Security Review Conference. In my view, that went a long way in underlining the fact that women's rights are inextricably linked to security.

*Dear Colleagues,*

The crisis in and around Ukraine has remained a major topic of debate at the FSC. I think that in light of the current situation in the OSCE area these discussions provide a valuable opportunity for a frank exchange of views between participating States. All of which leads me to say that, despite all the challenges, the FSC has continued to contribute significantly to the overall efforts to lower tensions and promote cooperation. I am therefore confident that it will also continue to effectively address politico-military issues in the future, with the aim of restoring confidence in the OSCE region.

Having said this let me also express my gratitude to all the participating States for their support and engagement in all the FSC discussions during the Slovenian Chairmanship. I would especially like to single out the FSC Troika members. Let me commend our Slovak colleagues for all their help and the good work in the first trimester. I would also like to thank our Swedish friends, who are now taking over the mantle. I wish my successor, Ambassador Ulrika Funered, and her dedicated team a very successful Chairmanship, also in view of the Ministerial Council in Milano in December. And, of course, I cannot but warmly welcome Switzerland as a new FSC Troika member.

Let me also thank all the FSC Chairperson's Co-ordinators for their work. They are Lieutenant Commander Vučić Bošković of Montenegro, Mr. Luis Manuel Cuesta of Spain, Dr. Isa Ghivarelli of Italy, Ms. Tiphaine Jouffroy of France, Colonel Hans Georg Lüber of Switzerland, Colonel Ville Pouttu of Finland and Colonel Dr. László Szatmári of Hungary. Similarly, I very much appreciated our cooperation with the OSCE Conflict Prevention Center and its Director Ambassador Marcel Peško, as well as the FSC Support Section and its Head Mr. Robin Mossinkoff. A big thank you is also in order for all the conference service officers and the translators.

As mentioned earlier, the Slovenian FSC team worked very closely with the Italian OSCE Chairmanship. I therefore thank Ambassador Alessandro Azzoni and his staff for the excellent cooperation. And, having mentioned my team, I cannot but thank each and every member of the Slovenian Delegation for their important contribution to our success over the past several months. FSC Chairmanship is a demanding task, which requires a collective effort. I would therefore like to say: najlepša hvala vsem!

*Thank you.*