



**OPENING STATEMENT BY
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STATE SECRETARY OF THE SLOVENIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST SESSION
OF THE OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION
UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF SLOVENIA
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*Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am pleased to be here in Vienna at the opening session of the Slovenian Chairmanship of the Forum for Security Co-operation. It is now seventeen years since my country last oversaw this important organ of the OSCE and thirteen years since it presided over its other decision-making body, the Permanent Council. A lot has happened in the meantime. If in 2001 and 2005 we talked about this organization having become a victim of its own success and about the need to reinvent its purpose, then today we have to agree that it is one of the few international institutions left where dialogue among participating States is not only still possible, but also taken for granted. We have thus come back full circle to the conclusion that if the OSCE did not exist, it would have to be invented.

The importance of this Forum therefore cannot be overstated. With its focus on the politico-military dimension of security it provides a unique platform to discuss some of the most serious challenges. And these are many. As you know, the current situation in Europe remains tense with many unanswered questions before us. The crisis in and around Ukraine, protracted conflicts in the OSCE area, erosion of arms controls, crisis of confidence- and security-building measures, increased radicalization, proliferation of terrorist activities and misuse of information are just some of the issues that call for our full attention. There is a greater need than ever for an open dialogue among the participating States. Political will and true engagement are crucial.

I would therefore like to emphasize Slovenia's commitment to the ongoing efforts to restore confidence in the OSCE area. This was also highlighted a couple of months ago by the Slovenian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs at the Ministerial Council here in Vienna. We truly see this organization as being capable of fostering dialogue, rebuilding trust and promoting stability. Its ability to do that stems from its comprehensive approach to security, which is one of the more significant innovations in the modern practice of international relations. This explains why the OSCE was the first organization that Slovenia joined more than quarter of a century ago. We also know from experience that when empowered by its participating States, the OSCE is able to react swiftly and flexibly to all kinds of threats and challenges. This was the case in 1997 when, with the support of the



OSCE, troops from several European nations took part in the humanitarian protection operation "Alba". For Slovenia, which was one of these nations, this also represented our first involvement in an international mission abroad.

I am mentioning these episodes from recent history on purpose, because they allow us to appreciate the work and importance of this organization over time. It is also in this spirit that we intend to use one of the meetings during our FSC Chairmanship to reflect on the centenary of the end of the First World War, which we are marking this year. The Great War, as it is also called, affected all of the participating States. Some, like my own country, still deal with the issue of unexploded ordnance from this period with hardly a year passing by without munitions not being found along the river Soča, or Isonzo as it is known in neighboring Italy, where one of the bloodiest fronts of that war took place. I therefore hope that this special commemorative session will not only address the origins of one of the deadliest conflicts Europe has witnessed, but also consider possible lessons for the current security context. Some of the parallels are simply uncanny.

While this event could be regarded as an innovative form of a CSBM, we will also have a dedicated session devoted to the issue of confidence- and security-building measures and to the question of arms control. In fact, this will be the topic of our very first Security Dialogue. We want to use the presence of renowned academicians in this field to encourage a stimulating discussion. In this sense, the event will also highlight the OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions, an important resource that this organization has helped to create and which is at the disposal of the participating States. One of these experts will also present research results on the implementation of the Vienna Document. Let me therefore use this opportunity to commend our Slovak colleagues for having reignited the discussion on this important instrument in the Working Group "A" of the FSC. In the hope that it could contribute to its much needed modernization, we intend to preserve this practice during our Chairmanship as well.

Another important document of this organization that draws its roots from the FSC is the Declaration "From Lisbon to Hamburg". Adopted a year and a half ago at the Ministerial Council in Hamburg it welcomed the launching of a structured dialogue on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area. I would therefore like to underline the great significance that we attach to this process. In our view, it can importantly contribute to cooperative security by promoting greater openness in military activities. Let me use this opportunity to express our appreciation to the German side for its pioneering work last year and for having led this exercise in a balanced, transparent and respectful manner. I also commend our Belgian colleagues for deciding to take up the torch this year and for their impressive attention to inclusivity. The 5th Informal Working Group meeting in capitals format that concluded just yesterday was extremely useful. We therefore look forward to the joint FSC-PC session on Structured Dialogue.

The other joint FSC-PC meeting during our Chairmanship will focus on the Mediterranean. This should come as no surprise since Slovenia and Italy are not only neighboring countries, but also participating States that are acutely aware of the special importance of security of the OSCE's southern region. In this connection, I would like to congratulate our Italian friends for organizing the OSCE Mediterranean Conference on large movements of migrants and refugees in

Palermo last October. I was there and I have to say that the event represented an important step forward in enhancing cooperation between the two sides of the Mediterranean. As the FSC Chairmanship we also intend to use the regular Security Dialogues to bring more attention to South-Eastern Europe, which is an area of special importance to the OSCE, where almost half of its field presences are located. We are therefore planning to present several examples of successful regional military cooperation. We will also highlight the important contribution of KFOR to stability in the Western Balkans.

One of the challenges that still affects the Western Balkans, but also concerns some other OSCE regions, is the issue of demining. In fact, this is again becoming an alarmingly topical concern, with the global number of landmine victims doubling in the past five years. The OSCE is well aware of this regrettable trend. Almost exactly one year ago a member of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine was lost to one of these silent killers. We will therefore have a discussion on the role of mine action in all phases of the conflict cycle.

Another subject that concerns the whole of the OSCE area is the issue of nuclear security. Two-thirds of all nuclear power plants in the world are located in the OSCE participating States, which also account for 20 out of 30 countries with full-fledged civilian nuclear programs. Slovenia is one of them and we believe that we should follow up on the FSC Decision 7/13, which stipulates that each participating State will maintain effective security of all nuclear materials and nuclear facilities under its control.

As you all well know, the OSCE is a consensus-based organization. It is therefore noteworthy that we have repeatedly managed to maintain our unity of purpose on the issue of small arms and light weapons. This is important, because the challenges in this area are increasing. In view of the recently adopted Best Practice Guide we will therefore address the deactivation of SALW. We will also touch on export controls, which play such a key role in preventing their destabilising accumulations.

The 7th Annual Discussion on the Implementation of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security will also take place during the Slovenian FSC Chairmanship. In this regard, we plan to organize a side event the day before the meeting. Together with our co-sponsors, Switzerland and Germany, we intend to hold a panel discussion on the role of Private Military Security Companies.

Let me finish this overview on a high note by pointing out that the recurring theme of the Slovenian FSC Chairmanship will be the role of women in security processes. In Slovenia we believe strongly in the importance of empowering women to contribute fully to conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution and peace-building efforts. This is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do, because involving women on an equal footing improves situational awareness and increases operational effectiveness. In addition to a Security Dialogue on the topic of Women, Peace and Security, we will therefore endeavor to mainstream a gender perspective in all the events of our Chairmanship.

Having said this I also cannot but recognize the dedication of the OSCE Secretary General to this important issue. Let me therefore express publicly Slovenian

support for the commitments he has undertaken as an International Gender Champion and for having already launched the Implementation Roadmap of the OSCE Gender Action Plan. I would also like to say that Slovenia agrees with his view that integrating women across the three dimensions should be part and parcel of the reforms to make this organization "fit for purpose".

Mr. Chairperson,

FSC Chairmanship is a collective effort. Before concluding, I would like to take this opportunity to announce the FSC co-ordinators who have agreed to support our efforts in the next several months. They are, in alphabetical order:

- Lieutenant Commander Vučić Bošković, Co-ordinator for the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security;
- Mr. Luis Manuel Cuesta, Co-ordinator on Non-Proliferation Issues;
- Dr. Isa Ghivarelli, Co-ordinator on Matters Relating to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325;
- Ms. Tiphaine Jouffroy, Chef de File for the preparation of the Forum's contribution to the Annual Security Review Conference;
- Colonel Hans Georg Lüber, Co-ordinator for the Vienna Document;
- Colonel Ville Pouttu, Chairperson of the Informal Group of Friends on Small Arms and Light Weapons;
- Colonel Dr. László Szatmári, Co-ordinator for Projects on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition.

I thank all the co-ordinators for their availability and commend them for their readiness to take on these important tasks.

Finally, on behalf of the Slovenian side, I would like to express my gratitude to our Slovak friends for their excellent chairmanship of the FSC in the first trimester of 2018. I would also like to thank our Serbian colleagues, who are leaving the FSC Troika, and welcome on board members of the Swedish Delegation.

I believe that together with the Troika members, the Italian OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE Secretariat we can make a positive contribution and advance meaningful dialogue among the OSCE participating States. As I said earlier, this organization was originally built for precisely this kind of a challenging international environment. I therefore count on all of you to assist us in using this Forum to go back to basics, to go back to diplomacy.

Thank you.