



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation Nr 711 Vienna, 27 February 2013

EU Statement on "Human rights and fundamental freedoms in armed forces"

The European Union (EU) and its Member States would like to thank the chair for the initiative of inviting Ms. Snjezana Bokulic, Head of the Human Rights Department in the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and the Legal Director of the Service Women's Action Network, Ms. Rachel Natelson, to today's FSC meeting; this is a very good way to illustrate the OSCE's unique "cross-dimensional" concept of security.

We fully share the views expressed today that armed forces can best fulfil their specific role and mandate in the realm of security when they constitute themselves around a model of best practice with regard to internal policy concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms and when conducting their external activity. The OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security provides a sound basis establishing such best practice guides. By adopting the OSCE Code of Conduct pS committed themselves among others to instruct its armed forces personnel in international humanitarian law, rules, conventions and commitments governing armed conflict and to bring their defence policies and doctrines in conformity with international law.

Due to the growing complexity of the mandate and the tasks of the armed forces in the international arena we are witnessing ever more situations where the competence of the armed forces with regard to the respect for and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms is at stake. The engagement of the international community

with regard to Afghanistan, the fight against terrorism and other transnational threats are sensitive areas where the respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law must be given particular attention.

Against this background, we emphasise and welcome the important contribution made by ODIHR in view of strengthening the implementation of human rights commitments by participating States, namely by providing assistance on the implementation of international conventions, on the compliance of domestic legislation with international standards and by facilitating the exchange of best practice. We would very much welcome if participating States could take full advantage of ODIHR's expertise.

The speakers have already underlined the importance of furthering the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security within the OSCE. In this respect, we would like to refer to the constructive exchange of views we had last autumn on the development of an OSCE-Wide Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. We wish to reiterate our support for developing such a plan and would welcome continued discussion among the participating States on this issue. We also appreciate other related initiatives, such as the development of the MenEngage Network.

The EU and its Member States believe that the FSC has a role to play in the implementation of UNSCR 1325. FSC should now step up its efforts to this effect. In our view, one of the focus areas for this work should be the voluntary reporting on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 as part of the information exchange on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. It would be beneficial to discuss the information that has been provided with a view of lessons learned and possible good practices for the national implementation of UNSCR 1325.

To conclude, we would like to thank speakers again for their presentations as well as the Chair for organising this Security Dialogue.

The acceding country CROATIA^{*}, the candidate countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO, ICELAND^{**} and SERBIA, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA and BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, the European Free Trade Association countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

^{*} Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

^{**} Iceland continues to be a member of EFTA and the European Economic Area.