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Keynote Presentation for the 2010 Annual Security Review Conference, Working Session III: 'The role and perspectives of arms control and confidence- and security-building regimes in building trust in the evolving security environment'

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Mr Chairman, Your Excellencies, dear colleagues and friends,
A year is a long time in security.
In the two years since I last spoke here at this event, we have witnessed many changes that are generally agreed – and this is confirmed by the live experience of the Corfu process – to have raised the general level of interest in revitalizing inclusive, Europe-wide security cooperation. That interest definitely extends to the special domains of arms control and confidence- and security-building measures, which are rightly seen as integral to any general improvement both of the international atmosphere, and of concrete security conditions.
As an academic I can claim no insight into the detailed political background to these shifts of attitude. But can offer you some analytical observations that may underline their logic.

The first factor might seem the most remote but is probably more relevant than we give it credit for – the economic crash. It most obviously provides a motive for cutting defence expenditure, and that can be both good and bad for the cause of security more generally. As we found out during the period of the 'peace dividend' in the early 90s, hasty and uncoordinated reductions can be counterproductive if they go against the logic of military modernization and integration, and if they leave us short of capacities needed - for instance - for effective peace missions. Also, it too often happens that the reductions are not taken where they would be most logical, because of special local threat perceptions that may or may not make sense in the big picture. However this may be, in more general terms the crisis is a clear reminder of the fragility of our European prosperity; of the constantly deepening interdependence among nations both within and beyond our continent; of the need to avoid selfish nationalism, and the need both to improve international regulations and obey them better, if we are all to emerge safely from these disturbing times.
In an even wider context, the crash strengthens my suspicion that the Euro-Atlantic region as a whole is turning into today's "Old World", facing a set of rapidly rising new powers whose relative strength is boosted by the high growth they are managing to sustain despite the crisis. If we let our own region be divided and impoverished by internal confrontations, the damage to our collective interests is potentially far greater than during the Cold War when we were confident of our superiority over other regions and able to look to them for satellites to serve our own East-West agendas. Today, controlling any country whether inside or outside Europe against its will is getting harder all the time: and if we are to have any chance of guiding developments elsewhere, I believe it will most probably be through soft power and the positive, constructive aspects of the Euro-Atlantic experience. We simply cannot afford to be sending the message to the new global giants that might is right.

Secondly, I have argued in the past that successful arms control is most likely when we are at least a bit afraid of our own weapons as well as other people's. That was certainly the case in the Cold War when a mis-step on either side might have triggered destruction for all. Perhaps it was too little the case in the last 10-15 years, when at least some of us have been experimenting

with new uses for military forces, often in the belief that using more force more quickly could keep the worst threats far away from our homes. Now, the latest lessons from those faraway conflicts that we have started, or tried to stop, or both, are reminding us painfully yet again that mere military strength can be a temptation and a trap. There is no older but also no truer cliché than the saying that the military can win wars but not create a peace. NATO itself is recognizing that increasingly openly with its new 'comprehensive' concept for conflict management. If military victory turns out to be only an interlude between one weak state and another weak state, or one frozen conflict and another frozen conflict, what has been achieved aside from lives and resources lost, new antagonisms created, and valuable reputations damaged?

Thirdly, I recall talking two years ago about a certain asymmetry of strategic agendas that had developed between those nations following a global interventionist strategy, and others still preoccupied with controlling and defending local territories. That asymmetry and the scope for misunderstanding that goes with it are, I think, less extreme today. Both in NATO and European Union circles I have noticed a return to concern and debate about local territorial security, which must automatically make us more aware of the importance of the neighbours with whom we share our extended continent. It should also remind us that the most constructive - and cheapest! - solution to any remaining concerns is to find ways of further stabilizing strategic relationships within our own region, and thereby further reduce the risks of military (or indeed any other kind of) conflict. Whatever global agendas we may still want to pursue, separately or together, we cannot wish to pursue them with risks of violence still smouldering in our rear.

All these and other factors may have helped to generate the present interest in revisiting old wisdoms and old successes in European security, including those bound up with OSCE and its acquis. But as a Greek philosopher said, no man can step into same river twice. We cannot turn the clock back on the widening of the security agenda which has relativised the importance of the military element, has drawn attention to many other ways we can harm each other by intent or negligence, but has also highlighted new ways of using military skills and assets in the service of other dimensions of security. We cannot escape the growing power of non-state actors and sub-state processes both in creating security problems and helping to resolve them. We cannot reverse the trend towards more frequent, ambitious and complex peace missions abroad, which is not just a choice made by Euro-Atlantic states but a worldwide phenomenon, and is starting to drive strategic thinking and military modernization in the Southern hemisphere as well. We cannot turn back the evolution in military thinking that is pushing us all towards smaller, more professional, more deployable forces; towards closer multilateral cooperation and specialization; and towards redefining deterrence, balance and crisis prevention in ways that extend across regional boundaries and may give our continent a dual strategic personality: as a potential base for tackling wider threats, as well as a security theatre in its own right.

The problem is that when nations create more capable and rapidly deployable forces, extend the range of things they plan to use them for, and club together more closely for the purpose, any neighbours who are not inside this process are likely to wonder what the implications are for themselves. Equally if a partner nation uses force in pursuit of one national interest, the question will arise of whether it can be trusted to pursue other interests more peacefully and to respect the agreements it makes to reconcile its interests with those of others. Now if ever in history, the truth is being brought home that it is not the weapons in mankind's possession that cause the problem, so much as what mankind proposes to do with them - and the misunderstandings and disagreements that can arise over the answer to that question.

One of the historic breakthroughs made by the original CSCE process lay precisely in the recognition of that fact, and of the need therefore to combine quantitative restraints on hardware with rules on behaviour; to combine transparency on facts with mutual explanation of the meaning of facts. Yet for the reasons we all well know, the OSCE itself has not been able to carry through all those tasks to the same extent and in the correct and balanced proportion. It has helped to maintain most of Europe in a condition of peace but not to eliminate the motives for those conflicts that have occurred, nor to restrain the course of the conflicts themselves. It has improved transparency on the facts about armaments but not helped us to talk together really frankly, perhaps even within alliances, about why we choose and hang on to the arms that we have. There have indeed been major cuts in conventional arms but the deepest ones have been unilateral and uncoordinated: so despite their many good effects, they have not directly built mutual confidence or even maximized the ability to tackle new challenges as one might have hoped. I have to tell you that from outside, the Euro-Atlantic region still looks highly militarized: the OSCE participating States account for roughly three quarters of the whole world's military spending today, and in 2007 they accounted for US $ 328.8 billion out of the total US $ 346.9 billion trade in armaments conducted by the world's top 100 companies.[1]

If this makes us wonder for a moment about our community's claims to an advanced security culture, we should also ask ourselves why Europe as a whole has not been the scene of the first successes in the latest arms control and disarmament revival. The new strategic nuclear arms agreement is a bilateral one, the recent summit on nuclear security was a US initiative, the new Arms Trade Treaty which could have a real impact on conventional arms restraint globally is being handled at the UN, and – as always – the major non-proliferation discussions are taking place elsewhere. On Small Arms and Light Weapons and on the question of humanitarian arms restrictions, important impulses and best practice may come out of Europe - including from this forum - but the real damage to security from such sources and hence the need for practical solutions lies overwhelmingly in other regions. What does that leave us as exclusively European topics? Short-range nuclear weapons, conventional force restraints in Europe and the future of regional missile defence plans – all areas in which progress and a wider policy consensus have not only been lacking for several years, but still look remarkably difficult to achieve today. I might add that all three of these issues have so far been handled in ways that differentiate between states - even within alliances - in terms of their practical involvement and/or their decision making rights. I am inclined to sympathize with those who ask whether such partial approaches still make sense for a continent as interdependent as ours has become, and a world where most arms control endeavours are striving for greater universality.

There are two ways of probing the reasons for these European blockages and I have already talked in a more general way about one of them: which is whether we ourselves have really cared enough about these things recently , or have perhaps found it more convenient to go on living with the problems than to resolve them. The other question that lies at the very heart of our discussions today is whether the established tools, methods and structures developed so far for our region are still fit for their purpose or not. Should the elements of our common CSCE and OSCE acquis be prolonged, reinforced, and renewed? Or is it time for them to be more profoundly reassessed and perhaps even set aside, to allow old issues to be revisited in a new setting that offers more scope for innovation and adaptation to new times? And perhaps even more crucially, will the best rules and procedures that we can devise ever actually be respected

[1] See the chapter on 'Arms Production' by Sam Perlo-Freeman in *SIPRI Yearbook 2009: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2009).

and used in practice, when the going gets rough? If we are not sure of that, it is difficult logically to see why one should even start on the process.

Mr Chairman, this hall is full of experts who know better than I the list of specific issues waiting to be discussed under this heading. The Ministerial Council last December mandated the FSC to strengthen the whole politico-military toolbox with special focus on arms control elements and CSBMs. This means looking among other things at the Code of Conduct of Politico-Military Aspects of Security; at the way forward on the Vienna Document 1999 including possible new generations and styles of CSBMs; and at the OSCE's contributions on subjects of more global concern such as SALW, MANPADs and non-proliferation of WMD. The CFE process, however, also comes very much into the picture here, and it must be said that the obstacles to any solution in the present framework have if anything increased since the events of summer 2008 - which among other things leave participating States divided over questions of international recognition. In one sense these recent experiences have underlined that security is indeed indivisible and have shown how closely the *technical* and the *political* conditions for arms control, including the most sensitive issues of state sovereignty and identity, are inter-related in reality. In practical terms we must however also wonder what we are saying when we continue to refer to CFE as the cornerstone of the European arms control edifice. If so much depends on one element that is at the same time so rigid and so fragile, what is the rationale for those widespread hopes of progress I alluded to before?

But to return to the range of issues for this debate: I have also noted ideas for assessing progress on the Open Skies Treaty; for considering new types of Crisis Prevention Mechanism; for trying to analyse the actual causes of crises and perhaps making use of a test-case study; for widening the approach to the safe disposal of stockpiles, and for reviewing and trying to strengthen sub-regional arms control efforts – among others. (I do apologize if I have left out anything here by oversight.) A more general issue on the table is whether planning an OSCE Summit later this year would help to speed up and crystallize agreement on one or more steps in this field, for example an updated and strengthened Vienna Document; or whether – as other organizations have found to their cost – it would be risky to invest too much in *process* before out present dialogue has made more headway on *substance.*

I have to tell you that some independent observers from outside the OSCE family would react rather ironically to this whole catalogue of issues. They would find it rather strange that while all participating States recognize the multiple changes of recent years in the actual security environment, all seem keen to preserve the basic principles of arms management established in this forum at times ranging from a decade to 35 years ago, and all want to build any new measures on the foundation of earlier and existing ones. Personally I would not be so critical of this attitude, because I do understand how precious the CSCE and OSCE *acquis* has been for such progress as we have made in stabilization, cooperation, reform and freedom in our shared security space. If we are starting to have second thoughts about some of the brave new ideas that we enthused over in the last decade, that is also a reason for being more respectful of older truths. Finally, I would not underestimate the symbolic value of even the smallest progress that might be made in reopening old dossiers and improving upon them, especially in those fields that matter for our own region's security rather than just contributing to global issues. As it says in the EU Key Messages document circulated during the Corfu process, 'Even the longest trip starts with a single step'. And if that recalls the wisdom of Confuscius, we might also remind ourselves of Karl Marx's saying that a number of small quantitative steps can turn into a qualitative breakthrough!

At the same time I must encourage you in today's discussions, and in the OSCE's further work, to remember always that arms control and security and confidence bulding *tools* and *mechanisms* are just that – namely secondary instruments, designed to help with a more substantial goal. They should be aimed to solve what the causes of conflicts, arms races, distrust and obstacles to cooperation really are in today's OSCE area: not what they used to be, or should be in theory, or what we would like them to be. As I have argued, armaments, technologies and doctrines themselves are rarely if ever the direct source of violence, and it is equally clear that restraints on the military or on armaments alone cannot cure problems with more complex strategic, political, economic and social origins. We cannot for instance look at frozen or actual conflicts in specific sub-regions without considering why the larger set of strategic relationships in the OSCE space is allowing them to happen. Equally we should not over-focus on open armed conflict while ignoring all the other ways that countries' sovereignty can be compromised and their security undermined, as in the case of cyber-threats that I believe have attracted much interest here recently. And we cannot look at OSCE's role alone without being aware of the many other institutional actors that help shape this strategic space, including the UN and other global regimes as well as the many regional and sub-regional organizations.

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Mr Chairman, Saint Augustine once prayed: Give me chastity and continence, O Lord, but not yet. I hope I am wrong in hearing a little bit of that flavour in some of the recent enthusiasm for renewed progress in arms control and confidence and security building. My fear is that we may mistake our current improved mood, and our extensive agreement in principle on these goals, as an achievement in itself: when in fact it is only the beginning, or the moment of opening the door for progress. Agreement is cheap, especially in an informal dialogue, while concrete agreements are difficult and painful; and we must not underestimate the effort of will required to walk through the open door if we are ever to persuade ourselves actually to do it.

That is one practical lesson we might remember from the old days. We might also remember than once you start moving forward, not every agreement along the way can be perfectly balanced and not every decision will be equally easy for both sides or all sides. To find the patience to progress through partial, incomplete and sometimes uncomfortable solutions towards a lasting and comprehensive stabilization, it is vital not just to listen carefully to what the other party is saying and to trust the wish for progress when you hear that wish more strongly and sincerely expressed than for many years. Even more importantly you must have faith in your own logic and constancy, and in your own partners' solidarity, so that you do not miss that first crucial step down the road out of mere nervousness and inertia. And trust and self-confidence are not the easiest things to find when the Euro-Atlantic region is facing all those larger challenges, and learning all those painful lessons, that I mentioned at the outset. All the same, it would be a pretty strange choice if we decided that we are more willing to live with the risks of an unresolved security problem, than to face the risks involved in mutual and constructive steps to set it right.
Thank you for your attention.