

Florence Agreement lives up to arms-control promise

By Peter Konstanty and Emil Schreiber

The significance of the “Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control” for Bosnia and Herzegovina and its neighbours may not be apparent to most people, but a recent ten year-anniversary reunion of about 50 high-level representatives has left no doubt about the Agreement’s continuing wide-ranging impact on peace and stability in the region.

The Agreement, modelled on the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, stemmed from Article IV, Annex 1-B of the Dayton Peace Accords of 1995. It was signed on 14 June 1996 in Florence, Italy, after more than five months of negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE.

The aim was to seek a balance between the armed forces of the States Parties, covering the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the then-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now the Republic of Serbia) by:

- setting ceilings in five categories of conventional armaments;
- reducing armaments to the agreed ceilings;
- exchanging annual information and notifications; and
- verifying compliance with the Agreement’s provisions through an inspection regime.

At their reunion in Florence on 13 and 14 June 2006, the Parties and their international partners had reason to be pleased as they reviewed the impressive progress achieved in the past decade under the Agreement.

Within the first 16 months, the Parties were able to fulfil their commitments, destroying some 6,580 weapons systems ranging from 82 mm-calibre mortars to battle tanks, attack helicopters and combat aircraft. On a voluntary basis, the Parties have reduced armaments by an additional 2,200 so far.

Since the Agreement entered into

force, 557 inspections have verified the Parties’ compliance with the Agreement. On behalf of the OSCE and co-ordinated by the Vienna-based Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office for Article IV, 848 assistants from some 30 OSCE participating States have taken part in the inspections. As a result of the arms reductions and the ongoing reform processes being undertaken by the Article IV Parties, units that would have been subject to inspection have decreased significantly — from 350 in 1997 to 106 in 2006.

“These results were made pos-



14 June 1996. Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini (centre) and (to his right) the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Swiss Foreign Minister Flavio Cotti, with the signatories to the Florence Agreement and other dignitaries.

sible due to the extreme willingness, co-operation and full consideration demonstrated by all Parties to the Agreement,” Italian Brig.-Gen. Claudio Sampaolo, Personal Representative since July 2004, told the distinguished group. “Your presence here today is evidence that every crisis can have peaceful and diplomatic solutions and that, even after a war, there are always possibilities for good co-operation and partnership.”

He paid tribute to his predecessors — Ambassador Vigleik Eide (1996-1997), General Carlo Jean (1998-2001) and General Claudio Zappulla (2001-2004). Ambassador Eide and General Zappulla, who were present, shared

their reflections on the historical process. The most recent milestone was reached in March 2006 when Bosnia and Herzegovina started implementing Article IV as a single Party with a single verification agency, at State level.

The gathering, hosted by Italy, also served as the fifth in a series of major conferences held to review the fulfilment of obligations under Article IV, and as the 35th meeting of the Sub-Regional Consultative Commission, the body that oversees the Arms Control Agreement.

“The level of relations achieved among the Parties is the best proof that the launching and implementation of the Agreement were justified,” stated the three Parties in a Final Document at the end of the review conference. They expressed their readiness to continue strengthening good-

neighbourly relations and regional co-operation — an essential precondition to their Euro-Atlantic integration.

Everyone agreed that the Article IV Agreement was a “living” document that would continue to adapt to developments within the States Parties until the day when it could finally be absorbed into a broader, more comprehensive arms control regime.

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