



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°854 Vienna, 24 May 2017

EU Statement on Prevention of Military Incidents

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Colonel Khabibullin from the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation to the Forum for Security Co-operation and thank him for his presentation. We commend the FSC Chairmanship for putting the topic of prevention of military incidents on the FSC agenda.

Hazardous or dangerous military incidents continue to pose a serious threat to international security. They may result in loss of human life and unintended escalation in tension. These incidents are therefore of great concern for the EU and its Member States. Thus, we highly value today's discussion which is timely and pertinent.

We listened with interest to the presentation on sharing experience in implementation of agreements on preventing incidents on and over the high seas. Despite several bilateral agreements on incident management, the number of dangerous incidents is on the rise, very often involving the Russian armed forces. Such incidents give rise to tension, increase the risk of miscalculation which could lead to an accident or even direct confrontation. The risk of unintended escalation remains high, in particular in the context of the heightened pace of military deployments, as well as snap and large scale exercises.

We believe that all necessary measures of transparency and clarification should be applied to dispel any concerns and to avoid any potential escalation. The OSCE represents – with the Vienna Document at its core - an important forum for mitigating tensions, conflict prevention and confidence building. Full implementation of the existing commitments in letter and spirit and in good faith is crucial for building confidence, and additional voluntary transparency can help dispel concerns where there is doubt or distrust. Increased military activities may cause instability and

tension which underlines the need to further develop and strengthen our politico-military toolbox, especially the risk reduction mechanism under Chapter III.

We believe that there are several very good proposals currently on the table covering many of these issues. In view of the current European security situation, the Chapter III proposals on “Risk reduction” represent good examples of efforts to dispel concerns and strengthen confidence between OSCE pS. We recall in this context the proposals on both para 16 and 17 of Chapter III, aiming at reducing risk, decreasing odds of miscalculation and diminishing actions that could give rise to tension. We would in this context draw particular attention to the Polish proposal dealing with the specific topic of military incidents.

Notwithstanding the differences among OSCE pS on the root causes of the major challenges to the rules-based European security order resulting in the current lack of trust and instability in the OSCE area, we value an open and meaningful dialogue on issues of utmost importance and concern. We should use every opportunity for such a discussion, including most prominently the structured dialogue as well as the breakout workshops on CSBMs and other politico-military events.

Before concluding, let us take the opportunity to thank once again the RU FSC CIO for bringing this important topic to the FSC agenda. We hope that this is a sign of an increased interest and engagement on this important issue by the Russian Federation within the OSCE with the aim to achieve greater transparency, predictability and military stability for the benefit of all pS. The need for full implementation in good faith and the use of the OSCE politico-military commitments and instruments, with respect for international law and all OSCE fundamental principles, including by refraining from the use or threat of use of force against the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of States, is of key importance to rebuild trust and restore security and stability among our States.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.