Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

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"Security in Modern World: regional and global factors and trends"

Remarks by OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger

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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to make a few comments from the OSCE perspective – the region that covers the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

Firstly, in the OSCE we have a rather broad definition of security. It is not just "hard" security, but also transnational threats, the importance of economic and environmental security, as well as respect for human rights, rule of law and democracy. All of these elements are inter-connected.

Furthermore, in the OSCE, we have long argued that security is indivisible. Security of one country should not be enhanced at the expense of others. The past two decades have shown us what happens when this principles is not respected and a more unilateral approach is taken.

In a world of complex and inter-linked threats and challenges, banking on national capabilities alone cannot sustain peace and security. Nor can it bring prosperity.

For peace to last, we need an inclusive security system – and an inclusive security dialogue. In other words, we need co-operative security.

Unfortunately – and I don't need to tell this audience – the trend is going in the opposite direction.

I am not going to dwell on the problems: they are well known. Some of the most salient include the violation of fundamental principles, the breakdown of trust, a lack of dialogue, the unravelling of arms control regimes, and the weaponization of almost everything (from trade, to migration, to information).

At the same time, we face complex challenges that defy borders. Terrorism and violent extremism, transnational organized crime, and large groups of people on the move. These are issues that even the most powerful states cannot deal with on their own.

So we face a critical paradox: support for cooperation is shrinking just when it is needed the most.

How do we overcome this dilemma? Let me mention five points:

The first step is to talk to each other. We need to better understand the perceptions of each other, instead of simply re-enforcing our own position.

Dialogue is the key to rebuilding trust and reviving a sense of common purpose and a culture of co-operation.

But today there is almost no dialogue between Russia and the West.

The OSCE offers one of the few venues where inclusive dialogue on security is still possible.

Second, we should increase military-to-military contacts. At the moment, there is less mil-to-mil dialogue than during the Cold War.

The Structured Dialogue, which is a process initiated by OSCE foreign ministers in December 2016, has already brought military experts together to assess consolidated data on trends in military forces and activities in the OSCE area. Such contacts should be continued and strengthened to see how we can reduce the risk of incidents and accidents, enhance the implementation of confidence and security-building measures and eventually even renew arms control.

For this, talking is necessary, but not sufficient. Concrete steps need to be taken to reduce risks and tensions, and rebuild trust and confidence.

Third, preventing and better managing military incidents in the OSCE area could help to avoid an escalation due to misunderstanding or miscalculation.

There are already some successful bilateral agreements that could be built on and complemented. Maybe it is time to think about an OSCE Code of Conduct on incident prevention and management.

Fourth, we should focus on enhancing military predictability and reducing risks through greater transparency.

Ambiguity about military activities feeds suspicions about intent. Large-scale military exercises, including snap exercises, conducted close to borders increase threat perceptions if other States are not notified. Bilateral measures to lower risks

related to military exercises should be expanded through OSCE channels to increase communication and help prevent misconceptions and miscalculations.

Fifth, we need better use of existing tools, and that means better implementation of the Vienna Document – the OSCE's key instrument for enhancing transparency, predictability and stability.

A few steps that would improve implementation include: operationalizing the points of contact mechanism; updating a catalogue of major weapon and equipment systems to consolidate data that have been collected since 2002; and developing best practice guidelines for voluntary implementation.

The Vienna Document, with its CSBMs, plays an important role linking the militaries of the 57 OSCE participating States. But with the passage of time, it no longer fully reflects current realities. Without modernizing our military transparency regime, growth in military activities, defense budgets and new force postures will increase the risk of an unwanted escalation. This is a strong argument for modernizing the Vienna Document. As a first step, a technical reissuance could be a confidence-building measure.

Mr. Chairman,

Now I will turn to another important security trend: the impact of new technologies.

Rapid technological change and increased connectivity in the OSCE area offer numerous benefits for security and development. But they also create new vulnerabilities.

The Internet can enhance political participation and access to information – but it can also be used to curtail fundamental freedoms. And it can be misused by terrorists, violent extremists and criminals. Cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure can threaten security and stability.

Meanwhile, advances in robotics, nanotech, stealth technology and other innovations are affecting military capabilities. The discussion on lethal autonomous weapon systems has only just begun. This new complexity will need to be studied and mapped before States can develop relevant criteria and a shared understanding of these capabilities.

Even more profound challenges lie ahead.

Think about artificial intelligence. We are just beginning to understand how it can affect us. But without a doubt, A.I. will have a serious impact on international security. If we can create a framework to encourage responsible uses of A.I., the benefits for stability, peace and development will outweigh the risks. If we get this wrong, we could be heading for disaster.

I hope that the OSCE can be used as a platform for meaningful dialogue on technology and security in the 21st century – to exchange best practices and enhance co-operative approaches.

Allow me to highlight how the OSCE has done something similar on cyber security. The 57 OSCE participating States have already agreed to 16 pioneering confidence-building measures to reduce the risk of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies. At their core is a dedicated crisis communication mechanism enabling States to engage with each other in tense situations. Our CBMs encourage States to co-operate to prevent tit-for-tat

reactions, or an escalation that could trigger a dangerous chain reaction that could lead to military responses.

The challenge now is to get States to implement these confidence-building measures. We could start by focusing on shared concerns, like protecting critical infrastructure from cyber-attacks. This has a direct impact on the lives of our citizens. And it's a clear example of how international co-operation is in every State's self-interest.

A number of OSCE States have "adopted" one of our cyber-CBMs. This means they actively promote its implementation. The Russian Federation plays a leadership role in the UN debate on cyber-security, and is very active in the OSCE context. So I'd be happy to see Russia "adopt" and promote one of our CBMs. These important commitments should not be orphans.

Indeed, the OSCE is demonstrating on a regional basis that practical co-operation on CBMs is possible. Both ASEAN and the Organization of American States have started to develop CBMs based on our example. Perhaps these measures can also be inspirational for other countries and regions taking part in this conference.

Mr. Chairman, colleagues, I don't think I could finish without a brief word on Ukraine. As you may know, the OSCE has a civilian monitoring mission in Ukraine. It includes more than 800 civilian monitors from more than 40 countries, deployed mostly in the east of the country. The mission combines on the ground patrols with UAVs in the sky.

The Mission is there to monitor a cease-fire: but instead it is recording hundreds, sometimes thousands of cease-fire violations every day. And it reports on a largely forgotten humanitarian tragedy – on both sides of the line of contact.

After five years, a new political impulse is needed to implement the Minsk Agreements, to stop the shooting, withdraw heavy weapons, and take steps towards a sustainable solution. This would not only improve the lives of people affected by the conflict, it would stabilize the situation in Ukraine, and go a long way towards rebuilding trust and cooperation between Russia and the West. This, I would say, is the greatest challenge for Europe at the moment. Perhaps new dynamics can create new opportunities.