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STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

Introduction

Mr. Chairperson, Secretary General, ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen,

It's a privilege for me to be able to attend this opening, plenary, session of the United Kingdom's Chairmanship of the Forum for Security Co-Operation. Our Chairmanship coincides, I sense, with a period of renewed interest in the work of the OSCE in London and, I'm sure, in other capitals across the OSCE space.

Many of you will recall David Miliband's observation in Helsinki last December that "the United Kingdom has never felt safer" than it currently does from conventional attack. But we're also clear that this is not something all other participating States share. Movement of conventional forces across land borders – as we saw last year in Georgia – can happen in hours.

It is partly as a result of the grave events in Georgia that international attention has become more focused on the work of the OSCE. The work of the FSC has a prominent part to play, as part of the wider agenda that is so important to the Organization as a whole. This is a crucial point for us. As Chair of the FSC during this autumn session, the United Kingdom will of course focus on the hard security agenda. But in our view the future security of Europe depends on all three dimensions. This cross-dimensional balance, enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent documents, remains essential. We are very grateful, therefore, to the Greek Chairmanship-in-Office for the skilful way they have brought the three dimensions together under the "Corfu Process". We look forward to playing our full part in these discussions, including as co-chair of the joint FSC-Permanent Council meeting due to take place, as part of the series of Corfu meetings, on 15 September.

But, we're here today in the FSC, which is unique in concentrating so much conventional arms expertise in one place. Making maximum use of this expertise will be one of our key challenges.

I'd like to focus the main part of my presentation on where we see the FSC's work as having particular relevance and importance. I'd also like to look at the other aspects of the first dimension and how these play into this work. Then I'll discuss how we in the United Kingdom see the wider significance of first dimension work both in the European and

in a global context. I'll separate my remarks into two areas – the, so-called, “Old” and “New” threats.

Old threats

It's fair to say that, in the United Kingdom as elsewhere I suspect, there is a relatively low level of political interest in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) and the confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) negotiated here in the FSC (compared with, for example, the NPT and other nuclear matters). Does this matter? It's clear that, as with so many things, there are varying levels of interest depending on the politics and history of individual participating States. But I don't think it's overstating the case that, certainly in the majority of EU or NATO States, most people with an interest in foreign affairs would not know about the work undertaken here in the FSC, or even that the mechanisms put in place after the end of the Cold War to help to prevent similar circumstances recurring, exist.

The question is, is this lack of attention in a wider public and political sense a problem? Or does the attention focused on these issues in this Forum, and the OSCE more widely, suffice to ensure that we can prevent a downward spiral of confidence about security in Europe developing?

It's certainly true that we appear to be in a period of greater misunderstanding, perhaps even mistrust, than was the case ten or 15 years ago. The underlying causes are known to us all and I won't go into them here in depth. We face particular problems over the implementation of the CFE Treaty and how we can move to entry into force of the Adapted CFE (ACFE) Treaty. The impasse over this legally binding Treaty impacts strongly and negatively on the ability of this Forum to do real work. Improved implementation of the Vienna Document, for instance, has not been easy to achieve in recent years. Within the current framework it should be possible, for example, to agree to allow more modern equipment for visiting inspectors or increase the multi-national composition of inspection teams. I fully expect that some of these issues will be revisited and further discussed in this Forum during the autumn session.

We could continue in this vein – and gradually move to a situation of complete stalemate on work in this Forum. But I believe there is a way forward where resolution of the long-term issues is possible. Moving forward on CFE and the protracted conflicts, including Georgia, requires us to recommit ourselves to those pledges and obligations we have made – from 1975 until now.

That means all of us being ready to begin reassessing our own positions and being strategic about the end state we want to achieve – a secure Europe, with each nation feeling and being secure from attack by its neighbours. This will require negotiation and compromise. It cannot be one side, or one participating State, demanding, or conceding, everything.

Building trust and understanding is not easy. This is where transparency and openness are of true value. And where lack of transparency, and lack of openness, can foster mistrust. The current impasse in the CFE Treaty is a case in point. For nearly two years we have not been able to exercise our Treaty rights in the way in which the Treaty envisaged. Although 29

out of 30 signatories continue to participate fully, the lack of participation of one important signatory is gradually eroding the transparency and understanding built up over years of Treaty operation. Finding a way to resolve our differences over CFE, and to move to entry into force and implementation of the ACFE remains an important objective for the United Kingdom. We fully support and appreciate the continuing work of our US and Russian colleagues in seeking to find a way forward to resolve outstanding issues.

That the Vienna Document continues to operate, if sometimes a little creakily, does give us some measure of continued transparency. There remain issues over interpretation, and full implementation, that the FSC is tasked to work on. Under the UK's FSC Chairmanship this session we will continue to work to build consensus on strengthening implementation of VD 99. This is true too for the other normative documents for which this Forum is responsible, including the Code of Conduct and the Documents on Small Arms and Light Weapons and on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition. We should not forget, either, other important Vienna-based instruments such as the Open Skies Treaty which continue to deliver. I am pleased to announce that, in the framework of the Open Skies Treaty, the United Kingdom and Georgia completed a successful joint mission over Southern Russia last week. This is a real success story for the Treaty, given the difficult relationships between these two participating States of late.

Following this theme of transparency, we have included two important presentations under Security Dialogue during this autumn session. Next week the Deputy Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe – DSACEUR – General Sir John McColl, will be visiting this Forum to speak about NATO's strategic priorities.

In October we will be hosting a Security Dialogue that looks at gender perspectives in arms control. Addressing the role of women in conflict situations is a key priority for UK foreign policy. It is now 10 years since the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and although some progress has been made, many problems remain. We hope that this discussion will help the Forum focus on where it adds value to deliver better on UNSCR 1325 implementation.

New threats

As you know, these "hard" arms control measures are not the total of work for which this Forum, and the first dimension more widely, takes responsibility in the OSCE. For the United Kingdom the issue of proliferation of WMD is one of great concern. The bulk of the work on this issue is undertaken elsewhere – through the NPT, in New York, and across the Danube at the IAEA and CTBTO. But this Forum does, in our view, have a role, under the terms of its principles of non-proliferation and subsequent Ministerial Council decisions, in furthering and consolidating work on non-proliferation. As the previous chairman of the UNSC committee established under SCR 1540, Ambassador Urbina, wrote in his letter to the Secretary General last year, the 1540 Committee would like the OSCE's help in implementing this resolution. Within the first dimension there is expertise relevant to this work and I very much hope that a means will be found to work together with experts from the Secretariat and other delegations working in the Security Committee to utilise this expertise efficiently in support of work on 1540. Although it is not yet finalised, we hope to have an in depth discussion in this Forum on 1540 during October.

Work on 1540 also plays into issues concerning terrorism, the security of borders and how they are policed or controlled more widely. Although 1540 itself addresses securing the movement of WMD-related goods around the world, the mechanisms it requires to be implemented by individual governments have a much wider relevance. Secure borders, good customs control and an efficient and well-targeted police effort have wider benefits in combating terrorism and the smuggling of conventional arms, be they small or large. The United Kingdom is particularly concerned with the security work outside, but adjacent to, the OSCE space, in Afghanistan. We are hoping to welcome the Deputy Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) here to the FSC in October. General McColl's insight will, we hope, provide a valuable contribution to the wider understanding of the challenges we face in assisting Afghanistan to a secure future and set out how this Organization may be able to assist in this objective.

We also face other new challenges. Our Estonian colleagues have been active in bringing cyber-security issues to our attention here in the FSC during their FSC Chairmanship last year. The security of our electronic assets, and finding ways to work co-operatively in protecting them from attack, whether by malicious individuals or other governments, is a matter of increasing concern. It will certainly be a feature of work to modernize NATO's Strategic Concept.

Global relevance

Working together here in Vienna at the OSCE, using the same set of commitments and obligations as our guidelines, allows good understanding to be built between individual delegations. That is not always true of the relationships between participating States more generally. The ways in which our administrations work are very different across the OSCE space. How we manage our administrations and the relationships between individual governments and their populations they serve also varies hugely. And then there are a multiplicity of languages, and cultural differences to contend with as well. Each one of these factors can build a further layer of mistrust and misunderstanding if we do not take active steps to overcome them.

This is why the work of the FSC remains important. It is the nexus where many of these factors come together and where committed individuals can seek to find ways to overcome them. Lessons learned in the OSCE can be emulated elsewhere. This is, after all, the basis on which the OSCE partnerships for co-operation were built.

Ways to address these challenges

In the course of this address I have already laid out what, in my view, this Forum can do to contribute towards a more secure future in the OSCE space. But I think the overall message can bear repetition. We have in place a set of measures, commitments and obligations to which we have all agreed. Let us make sure we all implement them in good faith. This may involve sending each other hard messages on occasion – or even passing difficult messages to our own political masters. The global financial crisis is biting hard into our capacity to deliver – budgets are under increasing threat as a consequence. The arguments to mitigate this pressure are underpinned by a long-term strategic vision that encompasses the cost of allowing the CSBMs cared for by the FSC to be undermined or eroded into irrelevance. Deploying armies is a lot more expensive than deploying diplomats. An

understanding of this aphorism is what led our predecessors into the creation of this Organization and this Forum. The distractions of the short term should not be allowed to deviate us from our longer-term thinking about the costs and benefits of maintaining and bolstering the groundwork that this Forum represents.

Conclusion

I said at the beginning of my presentation that there has been a tendency for this Forum, and the OSCE more widely, to operate below the horizon of political visibility in many countries. It may be a measure of the Organization's success, in that political attention tends to focus on crises rather than on issues or mechanisms that are running smoothly. But crises are not unknown in the OSCE space in recent years. And their consequences continue to be felt strongly, including in the OSCE. We need to use this Organization and this Forum to find solutions to these issues rather than allowing them to fester.

I know that colleagues here in Vienna will do their best during the UK's Chairmanship of this Forum to work towards building consensus on measures to resolve outstanding difficulties and problems. I hope the programme we have planned for the autumn session will stimulate lively debate and engender concrete proposals. We in London will do our best to help. We look forward to a successful Ministerial Council at Athens. We will play our part in the FSC as well as in the PC and the Corfu Process, in helping to bring this about.