

BRIEFING: Open Skies Treaty

NOTE: This is not an OSCE official document and merely intended as a briefing document for journalists and media.

THE OPEN SKIES TREATY

- Allows States Parties to carry out **unarmed observation flights** over each other's territories by giving them the possibility to obtain information on military or other activities by using photo cameras
- Aims to promote **openness** and **transparency**
- An effective tool to increase **confidence** and **stability** among all States Parties
- A solid foundation for States to work together to address **common security challenges**
- An efficient tool to monitor the implementation of the arrangements in the sphere of **arms control**

THE OPEN SKIES CONSULTATIVE COMMISSION

- Based in Vienna, it is the implementing body for the Treaty
- Meetings generally take place on a bi-weekly basis

THE OSCE'S ROLE

- The Commission uses the Communication Network facilities from OSCE in Vienna
- The Commission is a separate body
- All members of the Open Skies Treaty are members of the OSCE, but not all OSCE participating States are signatories of the Treaty

MEMBERSHIP

34 States: • Belarus • Belgium • Bosnia and Herzegovina • Bulgaria • Canada • Croatia • Czech Republic • Denmark • Estonia • Finland • France • Georgia • Germany • Greece • Hungary • Iceland • Italy • Latvia • Lithuania • Luxembourg • Netherlands • Norway • Poland • Portugal • Romania • Russian Federation • Slovak Republic • Slovenia • Spain • Sweden • Turkey • United Kingdom • Ukraine • United States [Kyrgyzstan has signed but not yet ratified]

The Treaty depositories are Canada and Hungary.

HOW IT WORKS

- A State requests another State for an Open Skies flight and both agree on an entry point for the aircraft in the State where the observation is to take place.
- The aircraft lands at the designated entry point in the observed State and both sides agree a flight plan (including the altitude for the flight)
- The aircraft takes off and flies according to the flight plan. Some 15-20 people are engaged in any observation flight, including the aircraft crew and the teams from the observing and the observed countries
- The observing party takes photos during the flight. The Treaty specifies a maximum camera resolution.

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- One could say that taking the pictures is not the only point of the flight - it's also a confirmation of the openness and transparency that a state party allows another to carry out a flight in the first place
- The photos are analyzed and shared with all other participants of the Treaty.
- The observing State will pay the observed State the fuel costs and landing rights etc.

SANCTIONS

- If a State refuses to comply with the request there is no system of sanctions although the State can expect to be criticized by other States

THE HISTORY

- In **1992**, 26 member States of the Atlantic Alliance and the former Warsaw Pact came together under the auspices of the then- CSCE to sign the Treaty
- Treaty entered into force in **2002**, with a membership of 34 States Parties, following a drawn-out period of negotiations

THE CONTEXT

The Treaty is one of three key documents aiming to enhance the openness and transparency of arms control in Europe. The other two are:

The OSCE Vienna Document (updated 2011)

- One of the main confidence- and security-building measures developed by the OSCE.
- Under this document, all participating States are required to share information on their military forces, equipment and defence planning, defence budgets etc.
- The Document also provides for inspections and evaluation visits that can be conducted on the territory of any participating State that has armed forces.

Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) (updated 1999)

- Limits no. of battle tanks, heavy artillery, combat aircraft and attack helicopters deployed and stored between Atlantic & Russia's Ural mountains
- Original CFE Treaty negotiated among the then-22 member states of NATO and the Warsaw Pact in 1990
- Updated in Nov 1999 with leaders of 30 nations setting limits on conventional forces on a national basis instead of (Western)bloc-to-(Eastern)bloc totals
- Updated treaty will come into force after ratification by all 30 signatory nations. Only Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine have ratified the revamped pact so far.