



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°995 Vienna, 8 December 2021

EU Statement on the outcome of the Stockholm Ministerial Council

Mr. Chair, amidst the current tense geopolitical situation the Stockholm Ministerial Council has been an excellent forum for high-level political discussions and dialogue to rebuild trust. It brought together Ministers from almost 50 participating States to exchange views in both plenary as well as bilateral meetings and side events on current security issues. The European Union and its Member States would like to extend our deep appreciation to the Swedish OSCE Chairpersonship and the Austrian FSC Chair for their commitment, tireless efforts and able handling of our meetings and negotiations in the weeks leading up to the Ministerial Council. We also thank the OSCE Secretariat and the FSC Support Unit for their valuable assistance. We welcome the adoption by the Ministerial Council of the decisions on climate change and on the appointment of Finland as OSCE Chair in the anniversary year 2025. We are disappointed that two participating States blocked Estonia's bid to lead the organisation in 2024, but hope that they will change their positions.

The European Union has taken an ambitious and constructive approach throughout the year and in the run-up to the Stockholm Ministerial Council, seeking to develop the OSCE and achieve progress across all three dimensions of security. However, we cannot deny that we would have hoped for a more sincere and outcome-oriented engagement during the negotiations by all participating States, including in the area of work of this Forum.

Regarding the draft decision on the normative aspects of SALW and SCA we had a déjà-vu from last year, leaving us with no agreement, despite a large support of this issue. This is highly deplorable. The OSCE work in this area, in light of the multiple threats posed by the illicit trafficking of SALW and SCA, is of crucial importance to all of us. It delivers tangible results to the populations in the recipient countries. The donor countries, including the EU and its Member States, are ready to continue to invest considerable resources in the fight against the illicit trafficking of SALW and SCA. We

reiterate the call on all participating States to work together in this area in a constructive and de-politicized way and we welcome in this regard the Joint Statement signed by 50 participating States last week in Stockholm.

In our view, we were very close to reaching an agreement on the Declaration on the Lisbon Framework for Arms Control and on the Decision on the OSCE-wide mil to mil dialogues. The lack of political will and insufficient readiness to compromise, in particular by one participating State, was the main obstacle. We reiterate our conviction that the OSCE politico-military toolbox, most notably the Vienna Document, needs to be modernised in order to increase military stability, transparency and predictability. We welcome that the number of participating States explicitly calling for the modernisation of the Vienna Document keeps rising, with 46 participating States having signed the respective Joint Statement this year in Stockholm. Moreover, we underline that the existing Conventional Arms Control and CSBM commitments should be implemented fully – in letter and spirit - by all participating States in order to rebuild trust and decrease tensions. We need to work towards an environment conducive to reinvigorating these commitments. In this regard, we highly value and actively support, the Structured Dialogue as a meaningful, transparent, inclusive, state-owned and state-driven process for in-depth exchanges on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area.

We also regret that we could not have reached consensus regarding the decision on full, equal and meaningful participation of women within the armed forces. Gender equality is a cross-cutting security issue across all dimensions, The EU and its Member States are determined to continue to lead globally on gender issues, including in the OSCE context, and we will not spare efforts towards the full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. We are pleased that the Joint Statement on WPS was endorsed by 53 participating States, which shows the increasing support for this important issue.

Despite all the efforts of our Austrian and Swedish colleagues, tirelessly trying to build bridges to find a middle ground amongst diverging positions and the constructive engagement of most participating States, it was not possible, for the second year in a row, to agree on any FSC-related document at the Ministerial Council. Given the importance of politico-military issues to OSCE's concept of comprehensive security,

this should be another wake-up call. We said it earlier that quality trumps quantity and the success of a Chair should not to be measured by the number of adopted texts. However, the existing strong commitments should not be weakened. Let us remember the motto of the Swedish OSCE Chairpersonship “back to basics”. The basic principles of international law must be fully upheld, because while these are being challenged, as we continue to witness, it becomes increasingly difficult to move ahead within our Organisation. Hence, the efforts on the prevention and resolution of the crises and conflicts within the OSCE areas as well as strengthening and developing of our arms control acquis should remain in the focus.

Dialogue is an inherent key feature of the OSCE. Even if our negotiations have again not led to tangible results, frank and candid discussions are always of a value, provided they are conducted in a constructive spirit. In the famous novel by Cervantes, Don Quijote said, “maybe the greatest madness is to see life as it is rather than what it could be”. In this sense, we should not decrease our level of ambition. There is still an untapped potential within our Organisation and we can use it, if there is a political will to do so.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* 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 UKRAINE, GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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