



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°842 Vienna, 25 January 2017

EU Statement on South East European Security

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Ms Zdravka Bušić, State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, Ambassador Simona Miculescu, Representative of the Secretary-General, United Nations Office in Belgrade and Ambassador Haydar Berk, Director of RACVIAC – Center for Security Cooperation, to the Forum for Security Co-operation and thank them for their interesting presentations.

We reiterate our appreciation to the Romanian FSC Chair for continuing the practice of including regional security issues on the agenda of our security dialogues. We commend the Chair for providing us with the opportunity to learn more about security challenges and threat perception, as well as regional cooperation in the politico-military area in South-Eastern Europe.

Mr. Chairman, the EU has close links with the countries of the Western Balkans. The EU's enlargement policy continues to be a strategic investment in peace, security, prosperity, and stability in Europe. We firmly believe that the prospect of EU membership continues to drive transformation and anchor stability and security in the countries aspiring to join. Good neighbourly relations and regional co-operation are essential to the stability of the region.

The EU welcomes ongoing cooperation in South-Eastern Europe at bilateral and regional level, also in areas such as war crimes, missing persons, refugee return, organised crime and police co-operation. Responsible political leadership and further efforts towards reconciliation are essential for promoting stability and the creation of an environment conducive to overcoming the legacy of the past.

The developments between Kosovo¹ and Serbia over the past days underline the need for increased engagement by the two sides through the EU-facilitated dialogue. The High Representative-Vice President of the European Commission has invited both sides for another High Level Dialogue meeting on 24 January 2017. Progress in the normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia remains of paramount importance for both sides, for the European Union, and the Western Balkans as a whole.

We highly value the tangible contribution of the Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control, Article IV of Annex 1B of the Dayton Peace Accords, to security and stability in South-Eastern Europe. We commend the State Parties for the spirit of co-operation, trust and dialogue while implementing the Agreement. We also continue to believe that this important sub-regional arms control regime remains a positive model for other sub-regions in the OSCE area, aimed, inter alia, at confidence- and security-building.

The multifaceted security challenges we are all individually and collectively facing require ever-closer co-operation and permanent adaptation at regional as well as international levels. RACVIAC, established in 2000 in Croatia as Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre, plays an important role to this end by fostering security, dialogue and co-operation in South-Eastern Europe through a partnership between the countries, civil society and academia of the region and their international partners, including the EU. Inclusive regional cooperation represents an added value in countering transnational security threats in countries of South-Eastern Europe as well as an important complementary mechanism supporting the advancement of the countries from the region towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes. We also appreciate the close cooperation between the OSCE and RACVIAC in promoting and implementing the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security.

Both the OSCE and the UN represent natural partners for the EU in South-Eastern Europe. This is demonstrated also by the generous support provided by the EU and

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

its Member States to the various projects, not least in the politico-military dimension. Most recently, in December 2016, EU-funded activities on disarmament and arms control activities in South-Eastern Europe worth EUR 5.2 million were successfully completed through the implementation of the EU Council Decision 2013/730/CSFP by SEESAC. Let us highlight the main achievements which include: increased security of stockpiles, reduction of SALW and ammunition proliferation, improved marking, tracing and record keeping of SALW, as well as strengthening of regional cooperation on awareness raising, information sharing and knowledge transfer and organisation of collection and awareness raising campaigns. We are pleased that the EU support for SEESAC activities was extended for the period 2017-2019 by providing additional EUR 6.5 million (Council decision 2016/2356). Further EU-funded projects on SALW with the OSCE as implementing partner in the region are under consideration. We would be interested in Ambassador Miculescu's reflections on how the UN and the OSCE coordinate and co-operate on politico-military issues in South-Eastern Europe – including with the six OSCE field operations in the region, and how the relationship could be enhanced.

Furthermore, the pressing need to counter the illicit trafficking and accumulation of firearms in the Western Balkans and the EU was acknowledged by the participants of the EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs in Brdo on 15-16 December 2016. The participants also reaffirmed their strong commitment to work together towards joint solutions, in order to address common security challenges affecting both the EU and the whole of the Western Balkan region.

Mr. Chairman, we live in a complex, more unstable and insecure world. Multiple challenges, including irregular migration, terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism and organised crime require co-operation among our countries to be successfully tackled. The EU will continue to co-operate with the Western Balkan countries for the benefit of the region and Europe as a whole.

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 and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA align themselves with this statement.

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