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**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR GESA BRÄUTIGAM,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF  
GERMANY TO THE OSCE, AT THE 2021 ANNUAL SECURITY  
REVIEW CONFERENCE**

1 September 2021

**Working session III: Conventional arms control and CSBMs – challenges  
and opportunities**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Distinguished delegates,

Germany explicitly welcomes the fact that the Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) was able to commence yesterday, and I should like to thank everyone who has made this possible.

The OSCE has valuable institutions and mechanisms at its disposal. We must preserve them and should not allow the ASRC and other formats to be torpedoed by a few participating States in their own particular interests. We are committed to the principle of consensus and we do not question it. Nevertheless, recurring decisions referring to the budget or holding of the ASRC must be adopted correctly and in the prescribed time frame.

Mr. Chairperson,  
Distinguished delegates,

Unfortunately, the negative trends in the European security architecture, including conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs), have continued since the last ASRC in 2020.

First, the announcement that Russia is also withdrawing from the Treaty on Open Skies calls into question the continued future of the entire Treaty.

We had hoped that after a promising start last spring, Russia would be willing to make a constructive contribution to the unresolved questions in connection with its implementation, in particular the inadmissible flight restrictions over Kaliningrad. Unfortunately, the opportunity for a more positive general dynamic was not used.

We regret that such a useful and generally functioning Treaty with strong confidence- and security-building elements has been damaged and endangered. It is now necessary to calmly discuss and evaluate the future of this important Treaty.

Second, the effects of the pandemic have taken their toll on the implementation of arms control and CSBM regimes. Many participating States suspended their verification activities last year to protect public health. Face-to-face meetings rarely took place, making it difficult to continue constructive dialogue.

The COVID-19 situation in many European countries remains uncertain. However, vaccinations and tests now offer better protection to a considerable number of people.

Against this backdrop, it is therefore encouraging to see that more and more participating States have recently announced their willingness to resume verification activities. This is an important indication that the commitments and assurances regarding conventional arms control are also being honoured in difficult times.

We urge all participating States who have not yet done so to follow this example in the near future. If armed forces can carry out military exercises, it must also be possible to observe them in keeping with our commitments and assurances.

Third and in general, we might have differences of opinion in many areas, but it is nevertheless an indisputable fact that the security environment in the OSCE area is deteriorating, mistrust increasing and predictability diminishing.

Against this background, inspections and evaluations under the Vienna Document and observation of certain military activities are all the more important. Germany would therefore welcome it if we were to be invited by Russia to observe the “Zapad-2021” exercise, which is scheduled to start shortly in the western part of Russia.

We have noted that the number of armed forces notified by Russia as taking part in “Zapad-2021” is below the threshold for observation under the Vienna Document.

At the same time, it is evident that a military exercise as indisputably large as “Zapad-2021” gives rise to considerable security concerns in the region. This is a clear indication that the Vienna Document is in urgent need of adaptation. In spring we also saw that Chapter III of the Vienna Document does not serve its purpose and does not provide adequately for crisis management.

The Vienna Document was drafted in the light of our experiences from the Cold War. Today we are confronted by a larger variety of security challenges. They include hybrid activities and military activities characterized by insufficient transparency, as well as perceived threats occurring on account of inadequate predictability or unclear intentions. All these challenges can quickly lead to escalating crisis situations.

A first extensive package for modernizing the Vienna Document, supported up to now by 34 participating States, has been presented. We call on Russia and all participating States to take part in meaningful discussion on this basis.

We should all recall the lessons we have learned from our long journey to co-operative security in Europe. We should adapt co-operative security to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Germany is willing to do this.

Thank you.