
Chairmanship: Finland**LETTER FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE FORUM FOR
SECURITY CO-OPERATION TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND, CHAIRPERSON OF THE SIXTEENTH
MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Your Excellency,

As the Chairperson of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), it is a pleasure for me to inform you about the activities of the FSC since the Fifteenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council in Madrid in 2007.

In preparing this letter, I have consulted this year's FSC Chairmanship troika, which in addition to Finland consists of Spain and Estonia. During 2008, the Chairmanships have continued working in close co-operation with each other to ensure continuity, balance and efficiency in the Forum's annual work programme.

The focus of the FSC's work in 2008 has continued to be on the core politico-military issues, such as arms control and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs), small arms and light weapons (SALW), stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA), and the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security (CoC). Separate progress reports on further implementation of the documents on these issues have been forwarded to the Ministerial Council and contain more detailed information about developments in the FSC during the year regarding these aspects of its work.

During the year, the OSCE participating States continued to implement their joint commitments under the Vienna Document 1999. Implementing and strengthening the *acquis* of CSBMs remains high on the Forum's agenda.

Overall, 2008 was a challenging and active year for the FSC. Initiatives put forward by delegations had by November led to the adoption of 15 new decisions, some of which are updated supplementary measures to support already existing commitments, while others introduce new areas of work for the Forum. During the year, the FSC also provided significant contributions to, *inter alia*, the Helsinki Ministerial Council, the Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) and the UN Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the UN Programme of Action on SALW.

Events throughout the year led to an intensified dialogue on confidence- and security-building measures and emphasized the FSC's importance as a platform to address and discuss security issues. The Forum's security dialogue on arms control and CSBMs was

reinvigorated, with presentations and discussions on several issues that are topical for the European security framework.

It is especially worth mentioning that the participating States conducted a consultative and constructive dialogue on increased tensions and the armed conflict in August 2008. A significant OSCE politico-military activity in 2008 was the use of the VD99 risk reduction measures (Chapter III) to address the incident of 20 April 2008 involving the unmanned aerial vehicle shot down over Abkhazia, Georgia. In the context of addressing the case, also the provisions of Bucharest Ministerial Council Decision No.3, on fostering the role of the OSCE as a forum for political dialogue, were applied, when the Chairperson of the Permanent Council requested politico-military advice from the FSC.

One of the most important annual FSC events, the Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting (AIAM), was held for the 18th time on 4 and 5 March 2008. As established in Chapter XI of the Vienna Document 1999, the Meeting provided an opportunity for participating States to discuss present and future implementation of agreed CSBMs, and allowed experts to exchange experiences, make suggestions and assess the implementation of the OSCE commitments in the field of CSBMs. On 3 March 2008, immediately prior to the AIAM, a meeting of heads of verification centres was organized for the second time. It proved a valuable opportunity to bring together the collective knowledge and expertise of participating States in the practical implementation of CSBM measures, and gave rise to an exchange of experiences and recommendations on their improvement.

Following the AIAM, the FSC prepared its contribution to the OSCE Annual Security Review Conference, held on 1 and 2 July. Following the practice of previous years, the contribution consisted of a list of politico-military elements that served as suggestions for topics of discussion at the Conference. Discussions at the ASRC on the current politico-military situation and the value of the OSCE's security dialogue, arms control arrangements and the CSBMs in the OSCE area revealed the continuing relevance of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE).

In 2008, discussion on several proposals regarding the improvement of implementation of the VD99 provisions continued in the FSC working groups and plenary meetings and resulted in two new decisions: one on measures to improve the availability of FSC-related information exchanged, and another on taking national holidays into account when planning verification activities.

In addition, the Forum adopted a decision on organizing an OSCE Workshop on a Comprehensive OSCE Approach to Enhancing Cyber Security, to be held on 17 and 18 March 2009 in Vienna, with the participation of relevant international organizations. The decision was a follow-up to an initiative introduced by the Estonian FSC Chairmanship, which was also extensively discussed during a joint FSC-PC meeting.

The OSCE Documents on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition continued to receive considerable attention at the Forum, and participating States noted especially the need for their continued and enhanced implementation. In accordance with the OSCE Chairmanship's programme, attention was equally paid to further development of the OSCE's normative work in this area and to continue project activities. The intensified work on the normative side is reflected in various activities during the year and the adoption of new decisions on updating the OSCE principles

for export controls of man-portable air defence systems; updating the reporting categories of weapon and equipment systems subject to the information exchange on conventional arms transfers; introducing best practices to prevent destabilizing transfers of small arms and light weapons through air transport and an associated questionnaire; information exchange with regard to the sample formats of end-user certificates and relevant verification procedures; and the overview of disposal aspects of liquid rocket fuel in the OSCE area. The OSCE also published the Handbook of Best Practices on Conventional Ammunition.

In May 2008, Working Group A held a special meeting on SALW, at which two main issues were discussed: the OSCE's contribution and participation at the Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the UN Programme of Action on SALW (held from 14 to 18 July 2008 in New York); and future actions by the OSCE in the field of SALW and SCA.

In 2008, the OSCE continued the implementation of projects in response to requests for assistance on SALW and SCA. Dealing with these requests from participating States in regard to destruction and stockpile management and security of SALW and SCA remains one of the most dynamic areas of implementation of the Documents on SALW and SCA. During the year, the OSCE continued the implementation of two joint assistance programmes with the UNDP, one in Montenegro and the other one in Belarus. The second phase of the comprehensive assistance programme on SALW and conventional ammunition in Tajikistan is close to being finalized, with the final completion expected in early 2009. In the field of SCA special attention should be paid on resolving outstanding issues regarding the projects in Ukraine and Montenegro. The FSC also launched a comprehensive SALW and SCA programme. In addition to regular donations to established projects, this programme facilitates contributions to SALW and SCA projects under development. In addition, the FSC received three new requests for assistance on SALW and/or SCA.

On 5 and 6 February 2008, the FSC conducted a Workshop on the Implications of Technical, Managerial and Financial Issues of Existing and Planned Projects on SALW and SCA. The Workshop resulted in a wide array of proposals for further improving the OSCE response and emphasized the need for further enhancement of co-ordination and co-operation within the OSCE and between it and other international organizations. An OSCE Directory of Points of Contact on SALW and SCA was established to facilitate information exchange among the OSCE participating States.

The OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security is a normative document adopted by the OSCE participating States with a view to enhancing the norms of responsible and co-operative behaviour in the field of security and the responsibilities of States towards each other, as well as the democratic control of armed forces in the OSCE region. During 2008, food-for-thought papers and proposals for draft decisions were introduced by participating States, also related to the OSCE Code of Conduct, more specifically concerning the update of its questionnaire, suggestions to promote public awareness, publication and outreach, and supplementary measures designed to further the implementation of the Code. A new decision was adopted on awareness raising and outreach of the Code. There is strong support for updating the questionnaire on the Code of Conduct.

Work also continued on supporting the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The participating States are currently discussing the preparation of a best practices guide for

implementation of UNSCR 1540. Such a guide would constitute a compendium of suggested implementation practices and could assist in the continuing development of national action plans by participating States. A representative of the OSCE and FSC troikas attended the Organization of American States (OAS) Workshop on UNSCR 1540 Implementation held in Buenos Aires on 13 and 14 May 2008.

A special Working Group A meeting was held on 23 January 2008 on a more active role of the OSCE in combating anti-personnel mines. The meeting was structured around three groups of subjects: strengthening mine action and the possibility of supporting these efforts within the OSCE area through concrete measures; the possibility of carrying out public awareness campaigns and of organizing subregional seminars with regard to mine action; and finally discussion on a more active role for the OSCE in combating anti-personnel mines.

Finally, in line with the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship's priorities, all three FSC Chairmanships in 2008 continued working on strengthening co-operation between the FSC and the Permanent Council (PC) as part of the OSCE's concept of comprehensive and indivisible security. Three Joint FSC-PC and three Special Joint FSC-PC meetings (VD 99 Chapter III) were held to address cross-dimensional issues relevant to the work of both the FSC and the PC.