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Enhancing Security Cooperation in Europe

As Prepared

Thank you so much for having me here to speak today. As a newcomer to arms control, I am pleased to be here at the OSCE in the company of such distinguished experts on these issues. I hope our conversation today contributes to broader efforts to increase security and stability across Europe. The security of United States and Europe are deeply intertwined, and we look forward to working closely with our partners of first resort – Europe – on issues such as Conventional Arms Control for years to come.

It is clear that the revitalization and strengthening of European security mechanisms – including those related to conventional arms control – would be a step in the right direction. All interested and impacted parties should be engaged in that process. After all, there is only one Europe, and its security will succeed or fail based on our ability to engage and work constructively with each other.

The United States believes the future of this organization must begin with the implementation of existing commitments that are built on the solid foundation of the Helsinki principles.

As we approach the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, we look out at a much different world than during the early 1970s. We should focus our collective energies in the Helsinki+40 process on fully implementing existing commitments and identifying how we can strengthen these commitments to meet the new challenges and technologies on the horizon.

We also need to effectively address terrorism, illegal drug trafficking, threats to border security, and the growing challenge of cyber-security in ways that respect fundamental freedoms and Helsinki principles. In our increasingly networked world, many of the most worrisome threats of the 21st century travel undetected on digital wings and have no respect for borders. Of course, cooperation on security in Europe was not originally meant to confront cyber warfare and rogue actors. The Helsinki+40 process should identify ways in which the OSCE can better serve as a platform for cooperation among parties facing significant transnational threats, especially in Central Asia.

The fundamental principles of the Helsinki Final Act and international law must be upheld and advanced by the Helsinki+40 process. The failure to achieve peaceful settlements of the conflicts in Georgia, Moldova, and Nagorno-Karabakh affects every aspect of the OSCE's work. As my colleague, Eric Rubin, noted yesterday, the goals for the Helsinki+40 process must include steps to address such protracted conflicts, to ensure an effective response to situations of crisis or tension, and to facilitate the presence of the OSCE when requested by a participating State.

At the same time, we have to recognize and take account of the fact that European conventional military force structures have been adapting in response to today's security concerns as well as to fiscal realities. A measureable degree of openness about these changes is essential to the future of security on the continent and around the globe. The institutions that have underpinned European stability for nearly the last half-century, including the OSCE, were crafted in response to the massive arsenals built during the Cold War. We need to look beyond that and update our perspective and our CSBMs. We must work to rebuild trust and revitalize conventional arms control and CSBM regimes to ensure predictability and transparency in a way that maintains military stability.

So, let's consider how the existing three-pillared conventional arms control regime contributes to our European security architecture. The Open Skies Treaty, the Vienna Document's CSBMs, and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), provide a foundation for stability in our strategic relationships. Each regime is important and contributes to security and stability in a unique way and, when working in harmony, they result in greater confidence for all of Europe. Unfortunately, they are not currently working in harmony.

First, I want to touch on the Open Skies Treaty, one of the most wide-ranging international arms control efforts to promote openness and transparency in military forces and activities to date. In the more than ten years since the Treaty's entry into force, States Parties have flown nearly 1,000 observation flights, enhancing confidence and providing insight into the security situation in Europe. These flights also provide valuable opportunities for our governments – in most cases, our military personnel – to regularly and effectively work together.

One of the challenges we face for the continued success of the Treaty is the future availability of resources. The Treaty will only be as good as the States Parties make it, and we cannot ensure its effectiveness with old aircraft and sensors. For its part, the United States has committed to transition from the use of film-based cameras to digital sensors. We urge all parties to redouble their efforts to modernize the Treaty to allow for the use of these new sensors and ensure sufficient assets for future operations. In this light, we note the Russian Federation's intention to introduce new aircraft and sensors to the observation regime.

We will need to continue to think creatively in order to advance European security in the current fiscal environment. The United States has proposed a number of ways to improve Treaty implementation while bearing in mind the reality of budgetary constraints in the United States and across Europe. It seems clear to us that the potential to share Open Skies assets among States Parties is underutilized.

We cannot address the importance of modernizing the Open Skies Treaty without also addressing the procedural impasse in its Consultative Commission. Unfortunately, specific national political interests have introduced a significant roadblock to the functioning of the OSCC by preventing timely and effective dialog to update and improve the operations of the treaty. It is not in the interest of any State Party, nor is it in the interest of improving European security, for the work of the OSCC to be held hostage in this way. We should all insist on a higher standard for the Treaty. No State Party should make procedural demands that compromise its international legal commitments and obligations when any correction to the underlying dispute or issue is outside the mandate and control of the Treaty's mechanisms. This situation must be resolved, and resolved soon in order to prevent this situation from cascading into other European security fora.

I now turn to the Vienna Document, which also plays a comprehensive and vital role in European security. It provides insights into military activities and equipment holdings for confidence and security building purposes. This set of politically-binding CSBMs and other measures have contributed immeasurably to Europe-wide military transparency and reassurance. In addition, the Vienna Document can serve as a useful template for other regions where nations look to build confidence regarding the military intentions of their neighbors.

To ensure the continued relevance of the Vienna Document, both to Europe and to other regions, we need to modernize the Vienna Document with two goals in mind: strengthen existing provisions and ensure the Document remains relevant to current security challenges. Looking at existing provisions, we believe there are ways to enhance key components of the Vienna Document – such as enhancing inspection opportunities – so as not to impose unreasonable expenses on participating States. In the face of today's security challenges, changes such as lowering thresholds for notification of military activities would bring the document in line with today's smaller military forces. We call on all our OSCE partners to engage seriously on efforts to take these vital steps to modernize and recalibrate the Vienna Document for the 21st Century.

We also have the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, with its system of verifiable equipment limits, information exchange, and verification. Since its entry into force, more than 72,000 pieces of Cold War military equipment – tanks, armored combat vehicles, artillery, combat aircraft, and attack helicopters – have been eliminated. Under CFE, thousands of inspections have taken place at military sites all over Europe, dramatically increasing confidence and military transparency on the continent by providing a means to verify the information provided in data exchanges. It is important to recognize that CFE and the Vienna Document are complementary, not interchangeable. Each was designed with a specific purpose and makes a separate and distinct contribution to overall stability in Europe.

The security provided by the CFE Treaty is too important to ignore. CFE has been an important pillar for European security as a whole and remains important to the United States. But we are at a difficult crossroads. Russia ceased implementation of its CFE obligations in December 2007. Unfortunately, after several years of encouraging Russia to resume implementation, in late 2011, the United States, along with 23 other countries, ceased carrying out certain obligations under the CFE Treaty with regard to Russia. We continue to implement the Treaty in full with respect to all the other CFE states.

Conventional arms control has contributed substantially to stability and security in Europe. We believe it has a role to play in building trust and confidence for the future as well. NATO's 2012 Chicago Summit communiqué confirmed the importance all Allies attach to conventional arms control:

Allies are determined to preserve, strengthen and modernize the conventional arms control regime in Europe, based on key principles and commitments, and continue to explore ideas to this end.

All of us, together, have made a serious investment in building the current security architecture in Europe. We must adapt and improve our efforts to meet our current and future security needs, and do it in a way that is efficient and effective for all countries involved,

while also preserving key OSCE principles and commitments. We have been devoting a lot of time and energy to this task. We're asking fundamental questions: what are the security concerns in Europe today that a conventional arms control agreement should address? And, taking into account the lessons learned from the implementation of existing agreements, what kinds of arms control measures could best address those security concerns and uphold core principles of European security?

We should all be proud that the CFE Treaty resolved successfully the basic problem posed by the destabilizing surplus of conventional arms on the continent. Today, quantities of conventional armaments across much of the continent are far below the negotiated ceilings, and are likely to decrease further.

While the NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation of 1989 no longer exists, it is clear that conventional arms control, done right, can significantly improve security on the continent by helping to address today's concerns. We must adapt and improve upon the investment we have already made in order to meet our current and future security needs, and do it in a way that is efficient and effective for all countries involved, while continuing to preserve key principles and commitments.

The United States wants to see a true strategic partnership between NATO and Russia as a key component of European security cooperation. One of the major practical achievements of the NATO-Russia Council is our collaboration on Afghanistan. It is important to build on that success and expand our practical cooperation on security issues, in particular by building military transparency and advancing in the spirit of reciprocity between us. We should also deepen our political dialogue, including on issues where we disagree. We all share common goals and face mutual concerns, including creating the conditions to achieve long-term prosperity for all our people. When we do not agree on issues, our relationship should accommodate frank discussion of disagreements in a spirit of mutual respect.

At the same time, we see opportunities for the United States and Russia to partner in ways that advance our mutual security interest and the interest of the international community. We can work together to safeguard and reduce nuclear arsenals and stem global proliferation, boost our trade and investment to help unlock the enormous innovative potential of all of our societies, and collaboratively advance freedom of navigation in the Arctic while protecting that unique environment. Missile defense transparency and cooperation is another area we should pursue, and the United States continues to seek a path forward with Russia that would advance the security interests of us all. Through transparency and cooperation, Russia will gain confidence that U.S. and NATO missile defenses in Europe are directed against threats from outside of Europe and will not undermine Russia's strategic nuclear deterrent. At the Chicago Summit, NATO leaders proposed the establishment of joint missile defense cooperation centers and the development of a transparency regime based upon a regular exchange of information about the current respective missile defense capabilities of NATO and Russia. We look forward to implementing these initiatives, which would enhance transparency and confidence and thereby strengthen security in the Euro-Atlantic area.

To sum up, our collective interests today go well beyond the territory of our nations. What's unique about our collaboration with Europe is that the issues we address truly span the globe. That is absolutely essential in our changing world, where emerging powers and far-flung events can have profound impact in all of our countries.

We have a lot of work to do on European security, and we will be challenged both politically and economically. We have the institutions we need to deal with these challenges, and we can make better use of them. We are going to have to be smart, nimble, and patient. Threats that spread across many nations and millions of square miles cannot, and will not, be eliminated overnight, and we all know that. Nevertheless, a safe and secure Europe is worth the effort, and I know that we are all up to the challenge.

Thank you very much for your attention.