



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°987 Vienna, 29 September 2021

EU Statement on “The Future of Conventional Arms Control”

The European Union and its Member States would like to thank the Chairmanship for this useful opportunity to discuss the “Future of conventional arms control” as the last of three thematically interrelated Security Dialogues this month devoted to the topic of conventional arms control. We also thank the key-note speakers for their insightful contributions that have provided us with food-for-thought for further discussions on the future of conventional arms control.

The debates over the last few weeks provided us with a sober view on the situation of arms control in Europe and the security challenges we are facing. All in fact agree that the OSCE’s Framework for Arms Control of 1996 was built on a positive momentum that no longer exists. For us, the gradual and persistent deterioration of the security environment in the OSCE area is clearly a result, first of all, of recurrent violations of international law as well as breaches of OSCE principles and commitments. Revisionist foreign policy, use of force or the threat of the use of force to change internationally recognised borders do not fit into the concept of international relations in the 21st century.

The geopolitical situation in Europe remains tense. However, it was even more so during the Cold War when the world was divided by competing ideologies and seemed on the brink of a nuclear war. Still, a détente was possible then. Later on, disarmament and arms control agreements were concluded with a view to foster transparency and predictability, and build mutual confidence in the post-Cold War situation.

Our principled position is clear. OSCE's comprehensive and co-operative concept of security with emphasis on Conventional Arms Control, Confidence and Security Building Measures, disarmament and non-proliferation, constitutes an important element of our common security. These fundamental and enduring commitments provide systemic and preventive means to enhance predictability and transparency. In so doing, they can contribute to reducing military risks and misperceptions, lead to a better understanding of threat perceptions and build trust among participating States.

We firmly believe that the full implementation and further development of existing commitments in the pol-mil dimension are essential for enhancing military transparency and political stability in the OSCE area. Confidence and Security-Building Measures were never designed to resolve conflicts, but to reduce military risks and enhance military predictability through increased transparency. Achieving this goal depends on every participating State fully and faithfully implementing agreed CSBMs, providing accurate, reliable and timely information on its military forces and activities, honestly responding to requests for an explanation and being ready to dispel security concerns expressed by another participating State. The reluctance to fully comply with the Vienna Document commitments does not contribute to a positive environment concerning conventional arms control and CSBMs.

In this respect we support a substantial update and modernisation of the Vienna Document, as well as further development of Conventional Arms Control (CAC), Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) and other instruments in the politico-military dimension. The viability and effectiveness of arms control commitments require however that they be fully complied with. Ensuring accountability is crucial to preserve the integrity of the established norms. This past year has not been encouraging in this regard. Earlier in spring we witnessed a regretful situation when one participating State refused to dispel concerns and provide the necessary transparency on its unusual military activities despite the issue being invoked under the Risk Reduction Mechanism of the Vienna Document. The recent briefing on the Zapad 21 military exercise involving the participation of some 200,000 troops but still not being subject to the provisions of chapter VI of the Vienna document is puzzling to

say the least and another argument in favour of its modernisation. We look forward to additional explanations in the forum or WG A.

Given the current stalemate we are convinced that political will is key in order to move forward in incremental steps. Modernisation of the Vienna Document would be an important first step in this direction and in line with the spirit of “OSCE’s Framework for Arms Control”. We once again call on Russia to fully implement existing commitments and to work with us to update the Vienna Document without any artificial preconditions.

We welcome the steps already taken and encourage discussions on the measures proposed for improving implementation of the Vienna Document, and, in particular, enhancing military-to-military contacts both in the High-Level Military Doctrine Seminar that took place earlier this year and in the Structured Dialogue.

We value the Structured Dialogue as a platform for in-depth exchanges on politico-military security as well as on threats and challenges of most concern to OSCE participating States, including new strategic challenges discussed in the Informal Working Group.

Our position on gender mainstreaming is unambiguous. We encourage all pS to enhance their efforts to fully implement the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, also in the field of arms control. We recognise that the role of women in arms control and CSBMs should be further developed and in particular see the need to facilitate the participation and representation of women in policy making, planning and implementation processes related to arms control and CSBMs. Our forward-looking message is to encourage that future updates of the OSCE arms control architecture will be delivered through a gender lens and mindful of the WPS agenda.

Mr. Chair, we remain open to a meaningful dialogue on how to reduce risk of conflict, increase trust among OSCE participating States and contribute to greater openness and transparency in the field of military planning and activities. We call on all participating States to engage constructively in these discussions.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, 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, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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