

Chairmanship: Armenia

981st PLENARY MEETING OF THE FORUM

1. Date: Wednesday, 30 June 2021 (via video teleconference)

Opened: 10 a.m.

Closed: 11.15 a.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador A. Papikyan

The Chairperson reminded the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) of the technical modalities for the conduct of FSC meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic, as outlined in FSC.GAL/31/21 OSCE+.

3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: DECISION ON THE DATE OF THE 2021 MEETING OF THE HEADS OF VERIFICATION CENTRES

Chairperson

Decision: The Forum for Security Co-operation adopted Decision No. 3/21 (FSC.DEC/3/21) on the date of the 2021 Meeting of the Heads of Verification Centres, the text of which is appended to this journal.

Agenda item 2: DECISION ON THE UPDATED BEST PRACTICE GUIDE ON NATIONAL PROCEDURES FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Chairperson

Decision: The Forum for Security Co-operation adopted Decision No. 4/21 (FSC.DEC/4/21) on the updated Best Practice Guide on National Procedures for the Destruction of Small Arms and Light Weapons, the text of which is appended to this journal.

Russian Federation (interpretative statement, see attachment to the decision), United States of America, Chairperson of the Informal Group of Friends on

Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition
(Latvia)

Agenda item 3: GENERAL STATEMENTS

- (a) *Situation in and around Ukraine*: Ukraine (FSC.DEL/263/21) (FSC.DEL/263/21/Add.1), Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Georgia, Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (Annex 1), United States of America (FSC.DEL/261/21 OSCE+), United Kingdom (Annex 2) (Annex 3), Canada (Annex 4), Russian Federation, Lithuania, Portugal-European Union

- (b) *Postponement of the 2021 Annual Security Review Conference*: Portugal-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, in alignment) (FSC.DEL/268/21), United States of America (FSC.DEL/262/21 OSCE+), Canada, Switzerland (FSC.DEL/260/21 OSCE+), United Kingdom, Armenia (Annex 5), Turkey (Annex 6), Azerbaijan (Annex 7)

Agenda item 4: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Matters of protocol: Turkey

4. Next meeting:

Wednesday, 7 July 2021, at 10 a.m., via video teleconference



981st Plenary Meeting

FSC Journal No. 987, Agenda item 3(a)

**STATEMENT BY
THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The delegation of Portugal, in its capacity as EU Presidency, passed the floor to the representative of the European Union, who delivered the following statement:

Mr. Chairperson,

Conflict resolution remains a top priority for the European Union and its Member States. Our intention was to speak about the ongoing conflicts in the OSCE area, including the conflict in eastern Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea at the Annual Security Review Conference this week. We regret and are deeply disappointed that due to the lack of consensus the Conference is not taking place as scheduled for the first time since the Ministerial Decision in Porto in 2002. However, allow me to make a few remarks on the security situation in and around Ukraine.

Regarding Russia's acts of aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol our position has been and will remain clear and consistent. These are in blatant breach of international law and of OSCE principles and commitments which are fundamental to the European security order. We reject the Russian narrative of portraying itself as a mediator in an "internal Ukrainian conflict", thus obstructing meaningful discussions in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) as well as in the "Normandy format". We urge Russia, as a party to the conflict, to take responsibility for its actions, to constructively engage in the discussions of the TCG and the "Normandy format" and to implement its part of the Minsk agreements fully and in good faith.

We underline the importance of a faithful implementation of the OSCE principles and commitments, including those concerning military transparency. We therefore value substantiated briefings by the participating States on their military exercises in the zone of application of the Vienna Document, as for example Ukraine did last week in relation to the current exercise "Sea Breeze 2021". We regret that Russia, on its part, has chosen not to engage meaningfully under the Vienna Document risk reduction mechanism concerning its military build-up along its borders with Ukraine and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula when the mechanism was triggered by Ukraine back in April.

Against this backdrop, the security situation at the contact line in eastern Ukraine remains increasingly volatile. We are deeply concerned about the fragility of the ceasefire as it was illustrated by the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) weekly report, registering a substantial spike of ceasefire violations. We call on the sides to redouble their efforts to maintain the ceasefire which remains critical for further steps in the settlement of this conflict. In this context, we commend Ukraine for its determination to do so, as well as for its restraint in responding to military provocations by the Russia-backed armed formations, despite the regretful and unacceptable death toll among its military personnel.

The SMM must have safe, secure, unconditional and unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including the illegally annexed Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, with a view to the implementation of its mandate to its full extent. We recall that the Minsk Protocol calls for permanent monitoring of the border and verification by the OSCE, and that the Minsk Package of Measures includes the commitment to reinstate full Ukrainian control over its entire international border. We believe that effective and comprehensive monitoring of the Russia-Ukraine State border is necessary to improve the security situation and to help find a sustainable political solution to the conflict.

We deplore any attempts to harass, intimidate or obstruct the work of the SMM and its monitors and condemn the continued restrictions, which occur overwhelmingly in non-government-controlled areas. We recall our position that any impediments to the SMM's work, including attempts to damage or destroy the SMM's assets, are unacceptable. Those responsible for any wilful damage, destruction or loss of SMM unmanned aerial vehicles and other assets must be held accountable, both politically and financially.

In conclusion, we remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full in order to achieve a sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with OSCE principles and commitments. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard and once again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to meet these commitments in full. We reiterate our deep concern about the presence of military equipment and personnel from Russia in the conflict zone. We call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the armed formations. The ceasefire must be respected. All Minsk-regulated weapons must be withdrawn. All foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries must be removed from Ukraine. Re-establishing full Ukrainian control over its State border is essential.

We recall our unwavering support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and call upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognize these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilizing the situation and reversing moves that contravene these principles. We strongly condemn the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014 and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, which we will not recognize. We continue to call on Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage to and from the Sea of Azov in accordance with international law. We express our deep concern about Russia's actions to block access to parts of the Black Sea, including near illegally annexed

Crimea and the Kerch Strait, and about the ongoing large-scale militarization of the Crimean peninsula by Russia which continues to impact the security situation in the Black Sea region and beyond.

Mr. Chairperson, I kindly request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, and Albania¹, 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.

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



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Forum for Security Co-operation**

FSC.JOUR/987

30 June 2021

Annex 2

Original: ENGLISH

981st Plenary Meeting

FSC Journal No. 987, Agenda item 3(a)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. This statement is delivered under the topic raised by Ukraine.

The United Kingdom remains concerned at the continued tensions caused by the increased Russian military activity on Ukraine's border and in illegally annexed Crimea in April. Two months following the deadline announced by Russia for the withdrawal of some of its forces, we are still concerned by reports which indicate a significant number of forces remain concentrated in proximity to the Ukrainian border and in illegally annexed Crimea.

We continue to be disappointed that the Russian Federation did not, and still chooses not to, engage constructively in using the OSCE processes and mechanisms available to provide necessary transparency and de-escalate the situation. This includes addressing Ukrainian concerns regarding the military build-up near its borders and in illegally annexed Crimea under Chapter III of the Vienna Document. This is despite repeated calls from fellow participating States on Russia to address these valid concerns and provide transparency.

Why does Russia continue to refuse to engage constructively in line with, and in the spirit of, its obligations as a Vienna Document signatory? This approach does little to build confidence and trust in the region and deliberately sows uncertainty; something that Russia must surely recognize.

The United Kingdom again calls on Russia to use the OSCE processes and mechanisms available, including through briefings in this forum, to provide the necessary transparency to address the valid concerns of participating States, including on the withdrawal of its forces, and so de-escalate the situation.

Sadly, it is not only in the case of the Vienna Document where Russia is refusing to make use of available OSCE tools to enhance greatly needed transparency. Just a few months after the start their unprecedented military build-up, Russia refused to agree to extend the mandate of the OSCE Observer Mission at two Russian checkpoints on the Ukraine-Russia State border for anything more than two months. This is wholly inadequate and is already having severe adverse operational impacts on the Mission and is a deeply negative signal.

Russia is also failing to use its considerable and undeniable influence over the armed formations it backs to ensure that the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) is able to fulfil its mandate throughout the conflict area. Despite long-standing plans to open forward patrol bases near the border, which the SMM have explained on numerous occasions are an operational necessity for comprehensive monitoring, the Russia-backed armed formations are still refusing to provide the necessary security guarantees for these bases. It is also appalling that the Russia-backed armed formations still have not provided the necessary security guarantees for the SMM to replace the damaged camera at the Petrivske disengagement zone.

The SMM's freedom of movement also continues to be routinely restricted by the Russia-backed armed formations. In the week beginning 21 June, the SMM's freedom of movement was restricted 18 times, all of which in non-government-controlled areas. Moreover, the armed formations are still limiting the SMM's ability to fully conduct its monitoring across the contact line and between non-government-controlled Donetsk and Luhansk regions, forcing the Mission to effectively act as three separate entities. This severely hinders the Mission's ability to implement its mandate in full and we will not accept it. Russia's silence on this issue speaks volumes about their lack of commitment to genuinely comprehensive monitoring in the conflict zone.

We call on Russia to take the steps urgently needed to provide greater transparency and enhance regional security. This includes fulfilling its Vienna Document commitments, agreeing to both the extension and the expansion of the mandate of the border Observer Mission, and taking action to ensure that the SMM has full, safe and unconditional access throughout the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea, in accordance with its mandate.

We reiterate our support for the Minsk agreements to deliver a peaceful resolution to the conflict in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the work of the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy Four in this regard. Russia must play its part and fulfil its obligations.

Finally, Mr. Chairperson, the United Kingdom reiterates our condemnation of Russia's ongoing militarization of Crimea, the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. The recent deployment of large numbers of Russian Forces to illegally annexed Crimea and the subsequent large-scale exercise was provocative, aggressive and wholly unacceptable. We also reiterate our deep concern at the Russian Federation's decision to impose restrictions on some areas of the Black Sea, including the approaches to the Kerch Strait, from April until October. These actions are unjustified and destabilizing.

The United Kingdom strongly supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including its territorial waters. As we have clearly demonstrated, we will always uphold international law and will not accept unlawful interference with innocent passage. We do not and will not recognize Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. The United Kingdom has consistently stood with Ukraine in opposing all instances of Russian aggression towards Ukraine and we will continue to do so, including through sanctions, together with our international partners.



981st Plenary Meeting

FSC Journal No. 987, Agenda item 3(a)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Mr. Chairperson, I would like to exercise my right of reply regarding my esteemed Russian colleague's comments in reference to HMS Defender's transit last week. In the interests of transparency, I was going to provide further details of the transit under any other business. However, given my esteemed Russian colleague's comments, it seems more appropriate to provide them now. So, in the interests of transparency, I would like to take a short moment to provide more details regarding the circumstances of the transit. The facts.

On Wednesday, 23 June 2021, HMS Defender (a Type 45 Destroyer), left the Ukrainian port of Odesa en route to the Georgian port of Batumi in the Black Sea. HMS Defender conducted innocent passage through Ukrainian territorial waters via a direct route using a traffic separation scheme, as is the right of the United Kingdom (and all nations) under international maritime law. This traffic separation scheme is governed by the International Maritime Organization and is designed to assist vessels in safely transiting congested waterways. The United Kingdom does not recognize any Russian claim to these waters, nor do we recognize the assertion from the Russian Ministry of Defence that HMS Defender was in violation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

At 9.50 a.m. (British Summer Time (BST)), HMS Defender entered the traffic separation scheme, inside Ukrainian territorial waters. At 10 a.m. (BST), a Russian coastguard vessel warned that Russian units would shortly commence a live fire gunnery exercise. At 10.08 a.m. (BST), HMS Defender noted gunnery astern and out of range of her position. This posed no danger to HMS Defender. During her transit, HMS Defender was overflown by Russian combat aircraft at varying heights, the lowest of which was approximately 500 feet. These aircraft posed no immediate threat to HMS Defender, but some of these manoeuvres were neither safe nor professional. HMS Defender responded by VHF radio to the Russian units on several occasions and was, at all times, courteous and professional.

HMS Defender maintained a safe course throughout her innocent passage, on one occasion manoeuvring to avoid a hazard presented by a Russian coastguard vessel before re-assuming her intended course. HMS Defender completed the passage safely and in accordance with her intended route, departed Ukrainian territorial waters at 10.26 a.m. (BST).

At no point were warning shots fired at HMS Defender, nor bombs dropped in her path as has been asserted by the Russian authorities.

Under Article 19 of UNCLOS, HMS Defender had the right to exercise innocent passage through Ukrainian territorial waters in the manner she did without giving any notice of her intention to do so. This is a right the United Kingdom affords to Russia and other States in the context of the United Kingdom's territorial waters, including the Dover traffic separation scheme in the English Channel.

The Royal Navy, as well as other NATO and partner nations, have enjoyed a routine maritime presence in the Black Sea for many years. At the time of this interaction, there were both Dutch and US warships operating elsewhere within the Black Sea. The Royal Navy's presence is about co-operating with our partners and Allies to advance regional security, stability and freedom of navigation.

Mr. Chairperson, HMS Defender is now continuing with her planned deployment and programme of visits. And I would just like to say the Royal Navy will always uphold international law and will not accept unlawful interference with innocent passage.

Finally Mr. Chairperson, I would again caution my esteemed Russian colleague against making repeated unacceptable and reckless threats which have no place in a confidence-building forum and will not deter UK forces from exercising their rights under international maritime law. I would encourage the Russian delegation to work co-operatively with us to reduce the risk of a miscalculation. The United Kingdom takes its treaty obligations, including the management of operational risk, very seriously and we expect Russia to do the same.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Forum for Security Co-operation**

FSC.JOUR/987

30 June 2021

Annex 4

Original: ENGLISH

981st Plenary Meeting

FSC Journal No. 987, Agenda item 3(a)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF CANADA**

Mr. Chairperson,

We remain deeply disturbed by Russia's continued evasive behaviour, lack of transparency, and failure to address legitimate concerns about their unprecedented build-up of military force on the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula and along the eastern borders of Ukraine. We reiterate our call for the Russian Federation to engage constructively in efforts to de-escalate tensions, particularly at the Trilateral Contact Group, and to abandon its tactics of denial and distraction. Russia must direct the armed formations that it supplies, leads, and fights alongside to cease their provocative actions.

We are extremely concerned by last week's spike in ceasefire violations, particularly in and around the Zolote and Petrivske disengagement areas, and the increasing number of explosions and bursts of heavy machine gun fire being reported within a five kilometre radius of the Donetsk filtration station. Once again, several of these incidents occurred whilst a bus with Donetsk filtration station workers was driving from the station to Yasynuvata. Heavy weapons are also still being sighted in violation of withdrawal lines, with 12 multiple-launch rocket systems observed in non-government-controlled areas of Luhansk, as well as 12 towed howitzers/mortars and nine tanks reported as being located outside their designated storage areas.

Unsurprisingly, there has been no discernible improvement to everyday life for civilians in eastern Ukraine. Checkpoints of the armed formations near Zolote and Shchastia remain closed, even though the Ukrainian Government opened the corresponding entry-exit checkpoints months ago. We have again heard reports of civilians being injured by explosive remnants of war, with a man losing several fingers of his right hand in Alchevsk, Luhansk on 4 April, and once more the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) has observed new mine hazard warning signs, this time at an armed formations checkpoint in non-government-controlled Stylya.

Mr. Chairperson,

Despite repeated calls from the majority of participating States for the SMM to be allowed full, safe, and unimpeded access throughout Ukraine, in accordance with its mandate, restrictions on the Mission's freedom of movement seem, if anything, to be becoming more

common and widespread. SMM patrols were denied free passage by the armed formations in non-government-controlled areas almost every day last week. The SMM must be given safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine. In addition, interference with the SMM's equipment must stop immediately. Small arms fire has again been directed at an SMM mini unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), and intense GPS signals jamming has become the norm. Jamming was again so severe that mid- and long-range UAVs were again unable to even launch on several occasions. Once again, we call on Russia to explain the presence of its advanced Zhytel electronic warfare system in eastern Ukraine.

Mr. Chairperson,

Crimea and the city of Sevastopol remain a part of Ukraine in accordance with international law. We denounce Russia's blatant violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, and deplore the impact that the conflict has had on the populations of eastern Ukraine and Crimea, and on the overall security situation in the broader Black Sea region.

We remain particularly concerned about restrictions to freedom of navigation in some regions of the Black Sea, in particular the approach to the Kerch Strait, which Russia has imposed for a six-month period. These restrictions continue what is effectively a blockade of Ukrainian ports on the Sea of Azov, and in combination with the movement of large numbers of Russian naval vessels from the Caspian to the Black Sea, are deliberately provocative and deeply destabilizing.

Mr. Chairperson,

Canada remains unwavering in its support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including its navigational rights in its territorial waters. We will continue to exert pressure, including through ongoing sanctions, until the Russian Federation completely fulfils its commitments and obligations undertaken in accordance with the Minsk Agreements, including the withdrawal of all armed units, military equipment, and mercenaries from Ukraine, and the return of full control of the border to the Ukrainian Government.

Thank you.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Forum for Security Co-operation**

FSC.JOUR/987
30 June 2021
Annex 5

Original: ENGLISH

981st Plenary Meeting

FSC Journal No. 987, Agenda item 3(b)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF ARMENIA**

Mr. Chairperson,

Allow me to begin by thanking the delegations of the European Union, the United States of America, Canada, Switzerland and the United Kingdom for initiating the discussion on the 2021 Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC). The position of Armenia on the draft decisions on the dates and on the agenda and organizational modalities of the ASRC was presented in detail during the discussions within the Preparatory Committee of the Permanent Council and in the letter from our delegation to the Chairperson of the Permanent Council that was distributed on 29 June under reference number PC.DEL/1029/21.

We concur with the other delegations that the ASRC is one of the key annual events for the OSCE and its participating States to address and discuss major challenges to peace and security in the OSCE area of responsibility. At the Porto Ministerial Council meeting in 2002, we all committed ourselves to holding such a conference annually in view of the danger that conflicts in various regions in the OSCE area pose to all participating States. Armenia deeply regrets that despite the ongoing consultations, consensus could not be reached on the draft decisions on the dates and on the agenda and organizational modalities of the 2021 ASRC.

It is indeed alarming that this situation comes following a year in which security and stability in the OSCE area were gravely challenged by a significant conflict involving the massive use of force. The conflict which resulted in thousands of casualties, large-scale displacement of people and tremendous destruction, should be at the focus and not on the sidelines of the ASRC of the Organization that is mandated to address security- and conflict-related issues. Such an obstruction from meaningful dialogue, mandate of this Organization and purpose of the Annual Security Review Conference is indeed unprecedented.

We believe that all necessary and appropriate steps should be taken by the OSCE Chairmanship and the participating States to duly reflect the security challenges of the OSCE area in the agenda of the ASRC. The delegation of Armenia has demonstrated a constructive stance and flexibility in supporting the efforts by the OSCE Chairmanship to overcome the stalemate and align the agenda of the event with the realities on the ground. We are guided by the conviction that the OSCE and its participating States should not be deprived of the

opportunity to hold this flagship event, and we stand ready to continue our constructive engagement to that end.

In the current unprecedented circumstances, we call on the Swedish OSCE Chairmanship and the participating States to uphold the Organization's purpose and spirit while ensuring that our shared commitments are not compromised to unwarranted expectations of one participating State.

I kindly ask that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Forum for Security Co-operation**

FSC.JOUR/987
30 June 2021
Annex 6

Original: ENGLISH

981st Plenary Meeting

FSC Journal No. 987, Agenda item 3(b)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF TURKEY**

Mr. Chairperson,

At the 2002 Porto Ministerial Council meeting, the foreign ministers of the OSCE participating States agreed to hold an Annual Security Review Conference before the summer recess each year.

The Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) is the main framework for enhancing the ongoing dialogue on security in the OSCE area and for reviewing the relevant work undertaken by the Organization and its participating States.

The ASRC provides an opportunity to exchange views on issues related to arms control and confidence- and security-building measures, including the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Treaty on Open Skies.

In this regard, Turkey attaches importance to holding the ASRC before the summer recess in accordance with Porto Ministerial Council Decision No. 3 (MC(10).DEC/3).

We deeply regret that this year the ASRC could not take place as scheduled because of the opposition of one participating State.

We call on all participating States to engage constructively in finding a way to hold the 2021 ASRC at the earliest convenience, and to support unstintingly the Swedish OSCE Chairmanship's efforts to that end.

I kindly ask you to attach this statement to the journal of the day.

Thank you.



981st Plenary Meeting

FSC Journal No. 987, Agenda item 3(b)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF AZERBAIJAN**

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Azerbaijan joins other delegations in underlining the importance of the Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) as one of the key events within the OSCE's first dimension allowing participating States to discuss a wide spectrum of security-related issues facing the OSCE area. We thank the Swedish OSCE Chairmanship for its efforts to arrange the ASRC this year and regret that thus far it was not possible to reach consensus.

As to the working session on conflict and crisis situations in the OSCE area, we would like once again to reiterate the position of Azerbaijan. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan has been resolved following last year's 44-day war in our region and the signing of the trilateral statement on 10 November 2020 by the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation. As far as the current situation between Armenia and Azerbaijan is concerned, the ASRC's agenda should reflect the reality on the ground and necessity of the OSCE's efforts towards consolidating peace and stability in the region in support of the trilateral statement, rather than obsolete notions and conflict narratives advocated by Armenia.

The enthusiasm of the Armenian delegation in trying to push for a special session on the former conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is rather curious and ironic if one considers the previous attitude of this country towards the session on conflicts within the ASRC. We would like to remind the participating States of the persistent refusal by Armenia in previous years even to discuss the conflict. Armenia has been doing its utmost to prevent the conflict from appearing on the agenda of the Conference. Thus, before advocating for a special session and for keeping the former conflict high on the OSCE's agenda, we would recommend the Armenian delegation to check its own record of statements in relation to the conflict.

Azerbaijan supports the holding of the ASRC this year and the efforts of the Swedish OSCE Chairmanship to this end. Yet it is essential to ensure that the agenda of the Conference reflects the current state of affairs and reality on the ground, and not the whims of one participating State.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.



981st Plenary Meeting
FSC Journal No. 987, Agenda item 1

**DECISION No. 3/21
DATE OF THE 2021 MEETING OF THE HEADS OF
VERIFICATION CENTRES**

The Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC),

Reaffirming that the OSCE Vienna Document 2011 (VD 2011) remains a key instrument for confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs), and noting that the Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting (AIAM) provides an important forum for discussing the implementation of agreed measures under the provisions of the VD 2011,

Taking note of the discussions conducted and views expressed during the 31st AIAM,

Recognizing that the aim of the Meeting of the Heads of Verification Centres is to exchange experiences and information on technical aspects of the implementation of agreed confidence- and security-building measures,

Decides:

1. To call for the 2021 Meeting of the Heads of Verification Centres to be held in Vienna, starting with an afternoon session on 15 December 2021 and continuing on 16 December 2021;
2. To task the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) with preparing and chairing the meeting;
3. To task the CPC with reporting on the 2021 Meeting of the Heads of Verification Centres at the opening session of the 32nd AIAM.

981st Plenary Meeting

FSC Journal No. 987, Agenda item 2

**DECISION No. 4/21
UPDATED BEST PRACTICE GUIDE ON NATIONAL PROCEDURES
FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS**

The Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC),

Fulfilling the mandate given by Ministerial Council Decision No. 10/17 on small arms and light weapons (SALW) and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA), adopted in Vienna in December 2017, and encouraged by the acknowledgement of the 2018 Milan Ministerial Council Declaration on OSCE Efforts in the Field of Norms and Best Practices on SALW and SCA of “the need for the OSCE to continue to enhance its SALW- and SCA-related norms and best practices and their implementation”,

Recognizing the outcomes of the Third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which took place in New York from 18 to 29 June 2018,

Acknowledging that the updated best practice guide could also serve as a guide for national policy making on the part of participating States and encourage the voluntary implementation of higher common standards of practice among all participating States,

Noting that the updated best practice guide could also be useful to OSCE Partners for Co-operation and other United Nations Member States in their efforts to tackle the risks and challenges caused by reactivated, converted or otherwise illegally modified small arms,

Decides to:

1. Welcome, giving it its full title, the updated Best Practice Guide on National Procedures for the Destruction of Small Arms and Light Weapons, which presents examples of best practices aimed at providing information and analysis for developing policy and designing general guidelines and procedures for the destruction of SALW from the time of identification for destruction until the final disposal of scrap material (FSC.DEL/264/20/Rev.1);
2. Endorse the publication of the updated best practice guide in all six OSCE languages and to encourage participating States to make the guide available as appropriate;

3. Task the Conflict Prevention Centre with ensuring the widest possible circulation of the updated best practice guide, including to the OSCE Partners for Co-operation and the United Nations;

4. Request that the updated best practice guide be presented at the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

This updated Best Practice Guide replaces the Best Practice Guide on National Procedures for the Destruction of Small Arms and Light Weapons (FSC.GAL/26/03/Rev.2, 19 September 2003) welcomed by the FSC Decision No. 5/03 on the Best Practice Guides on Small Arms and Light Weapons dated 18 June 2003.

FSC.DEC/4/21

30 June 2021

Attachment

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of the Russian Federation:

“Having joined the consensus regarding the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) decision adopted today on the updated Best Practice Guide on National Procedures for the Destruction of Small Arms and Light Weapons, the delegation of the Russian Federation feels it necessary to make the following interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE.

In welcoming the adoption of the updated Best Practice Guide on National Procedures for the Destruction of Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Russian Federation takes the position that the implementation of this document will be of a voluntary nature.

We request that this statement be attached to the adopted decision.”