



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on “Special Session: The Structured Dialogue”

The European Union and its Member States would like to thank the Albanian Chairmanship for organising this Special Session of the Structured Dialogue. We highly value and actively support the Structured Dialogue, which we are ready to develop further in accordance with the Hamburg Declaration, as a transparent, inclusive, state-owned and -driven confidence building process, without a predetermined outcome and of high relevance for the EU.

Ambassador Cuesta, we want to express our support to you and your motto – *Understanding for Security* and the four key phases: listening, reflecting, sharing and learning – of the Structured Dialogue. We also thank you and your team for your thorough and professional work during these challenging times.

We continue to see the Structured Dialogue as a meaningful platform for in-depth exchanges on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area. In this context, we would like to reiterate our serious concerns over Russia’s acts of aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which represent a clear violation of international law and a serious challenge to European security. It is essential to restore full respect for international law and fundamental OSCE principles by all participating States. Against this background, we welcome the continued focus of the Structured Dialogue on politico-military issues and on security threats and challenges of most concern to OSCE participating States to foster a greater understanding on these issues that could serve as a common solid basis for a way forward.

We thank you for including COVID-19 as a timely topic in the agenda of the June IWG. As stated by many participating States in that meeting, it is of utmost importance that COVID-19 is not used as a pretext to ignore violations of international law and fundamental OSCE principles and commitments, both in the politico-military dimension and regarding human rights. This is vital. We reiterate our call on all participating States to continue to be guided by the principles of transparency and openness aimed at ensuring confidence among States and avoiding possible misperceptions and reducing the risk of conflict in the OSCE region.

Transparency is even more important in these times, as verification activities in the field of arms control and CSBMs are understandably on hold. Thus, on top of ongoing implementation issues, the conventional arms control and confidence and security building measures face a new challenge. The postponement of verification activities has the potential to further diminish trust among participating States. In this context, all States should comply with the existing commitments and demonstrate good will and exercise full transparency by providing adequate information about major military activities. We also call for a common approach in resuming verification activities without unnecessary delay.

To overcome both existing and new challenges, it is important to make the best of the TRRIP measures that we have at our disposal. We should pay increased attention on how the current GEMI develops. It is important that during the COVID-19 electronic exchange of information within GEMI has been possible as well as validation of data and transmission of notifications via the Communications Network. Participating States should also make better use of good practices concerning voluntary measures. Here, additional briefings on military exercises and activities would be highly welcome. Such a proactive approach would help dispel concerns with regard to military activities and thus mitigate risk. To facilitate this, we see merit in the development of a template illustrating possible transparency and security building measures during all phases of an exercise and welcome the readiness of one EU Member State to present such a template at the next Expert-Level Workshop.

We can also continue to make better use of available digital technology to facilitate, for example, the exchange of information and confidence building measures. Nevertheless, we believe that the current, mostly digital implementation of arms control and CSBMs mechanisms cannot fully substitute for on the spot activities. These should therefore resume as soon as circumstances allow. In this context, we would like to

draw attention to the non-papers distributed by two EU Member States, which propose steps that could help resume activities and conduct inspections and flights in a safe manner.

Furthermore, it is important to continue our work on the modernisation of the Vienna Document. Its key elements focus on enhancing transparency and predictability and reducing risk. These are issues, which are highly relevant during these challenging times. The EU has been and remains a strong supporter of Vienna Document modernization. We appeal to all participating States to generate momentum for meaningful work on this at the FSC in the coming months.

Concerning the politico-military aspects of security discussed during the June IWG, we support continuing discussions on best practices on risk reduction measures and on practical tools and mechanisms for incident prevention and management to minimise risks and reduce escalatory potential. Furthermore, we would like to express our readiness to examine further best practices on the prevention and management of military incidents among participating States. It is of utmost importance to improve safety and promote risk reduction regarding military activities through appropriate OSCE confidence building measures. We support continuing expert level exchanges and military-to-military contacts within the Structured Dialogue and look forward to further discussions in the September Expert Level Workshop on transparency on military exercises and activities. We also see merit in the development of a template for voluntary briefings. When considering these issues, it is important to keep in mind however that voluntary measures are not a substitute for full implementation, in letter and spirit, of existing politico-military commitments by all OSCE participating States, and the importance of reciprocity in rebuilding trust and confidence.

With regard to hybrid issues, we regret that the Russian Federation chose not to participate in the second part of discussions of the June IWG. We call on all participants to make best use of the Structured Dialogue process and to interact in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect. We see merit in discussing military-related aspects of hybrid threats that are coherent with the SD mandate.

Mr. Chairman, we are ready to continue our dialogue in the October IWG at the political level with strong capital presence. We look forward to examining the various ideas further and working closely with the Chair. We hope that all participating States are ready to do the same. The Structured Dialogue is a meaningful platform for in-depth exchanges on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area.

It is important that we all work together towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating Conventional Arms Control and CSBMs, as we all agreed in the Hamburg Declaration.

Finally, we would like to encourage you to continue with your important task and reiterate our full support and appreciation for your efforts and leadership as Chair of the Informal Working Group.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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