



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**939th Plenary Meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation
“The 20th Anniversary of the OSCE Istanbul Summit”**

**Address by OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger
*Vienna, 29 January 2020***

Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,

I am very pleased to speak to you today. I would like to thank Ambassador Soysal and the Turkish FSC Chairmanship for their initiative to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit.

The Istanbul Summit was marked by hope and a co-operative spirit. Hope that major confrontations would be behind us. Trust and confidence that by working together, we could substantially reduce and even eradicate some common security challenges.

At the Istanbul Summit, our leaders pledged to strengthen the OSCE so that our organization could tackle the threats and challenges facing our region, including by strengthening co-operation with other international organizations. They reiterated the need to work together to address shared challenges and agreed not to strengthen their security at the expense of security of other States.

Twenty years on, this co-operative spirit has eroded. Promoting multilateral co-operation is no longer in vogue. Some of the world’s most powerful leaders now openly display their distrust

of international institutions, oppose international governance, and are increasingly tempted to take unilateral and often confrontational approaches to foreign policy.

While this may offer short-term benefits for those with the greatest bargaining power, it is detrimental and costly in the longer term. It also erodes trust and confidence among states, hindering co-operation on common challenges.

Today we live in a world where a host of complex threats, transnational challenges and regional conflicts are increasing instability and undermining existing security frameworks. At the same time, rapid technological change is creating additional vulnerabilities. No state can handle these trends alone. They all stretch across state borders. And they demand co-ordinated and co-operative responses.

So how can we rekindle the co-operative spirit of the Istanbul Summit to confront today's shared security challenges? Allow me to offer a few suggestions: I will make four points:

First, we need to **revitalize the concept of multilateralism**, and ensure that our tools for addressing conflicts remain relevant and sufficiently flexible to address the security challenges we face today.

We should **promote “meaningful multilateralism”** that brings visible benefit to people. It must be responsive to the needs of individual states, their governments and the public.

This means that we must promote and practice **genuine dialogue**. Dialogue is at the core of multilateralism, and at the heart of the OSCE's work.

The Charter for European Security agreed in Istanbul – like the Paris Charter and the Helsinki Final Act before it – showed what the participating States can achieve when they engage in genuine dialogue.

In today's tense and highly politicized security landscape, we all know that it can be particularly difficult to reach consensus. So we need to use every opportunity for dialogue.

We should all be proud of the unique platform for addressing shared challenges that the OSCE offers thanks to our comprehensive approach to security and our inclusive membership. We also have a rich array of tools for conflict prevention and conflict resolution, including in the politico-military dimension.

The Structured Dialogue's inclusive platform offers participating States a useful space to engage on issues that can be difficult to address in the formal OSCE forums like the FSC. This informal process, owned and driven by you, the participating States, has stimulated useful exchanges on threat perceptions, force postures and military doctrines. It has also begun to discuss practical steps to reduce military tensions. And I am convinced that it has the potential to do more.

Second, we need to **preserve the principles and commitments that form the bedrock of our Organization**. They have established clear standards for how participating States should treat each other and their citizens. They help guide relationships between States on the basis of equal partnership, solidarity and transparency.

We must make sure that our principles and commitments are fully implemented and applied equally to all OSCE participating States in good faith.

The politico-military commitments agreed by this Forum are no exception. In Istanbul, our leaders confirmed that their full implementation is a key contribution to political and military stability. So at a time when trust is low and the risk of military incidents is rising, the importance of fully implementing the Vienna Document cannot be overemphasized.

Third, we need a **common vision** for how we can overcome today's security challenges, and in the longer term, for what a future European security architecture would look like. What we have now is sort of an agreement on what our shared security challenges are, but there is no common understanding of how we can overcome them or what our future co-operation should look like.

In Istanbul, participating States reaffirmed that – I quote – “[d]isarmament, arms control and CSBMs are important parts of the overall efforts to enhance security by fostering stability, transparency and predictability.”

The arms control agreements created in the 1990s are intertwined and closely linked to each other. Disrupting one tilts the balance and inevitably creates frictions with the others. So every element of our web of arms control agreements should be carefully preserved and adjusted as necessary. These arrangements are not ends in themselves. Rather, they create stability and predictability in the system, and thus serve national security interests.

This is why I believe the Vienna Document should reflect the realities of today's security situation and technological developments. I believe we should be more creative so to come to a common understanding to start modernizing it.

Some States call for strategic patience. But time is running out. There is no more room for zero-sum games. We need to revive the Istanbul spirit.

Fourth, we should **maximize the effectiveness of our existing instruments to enhance our political dialogue**. The Istanbul Summit charged the FSC, within its mandate, to address security concerns in greater depth and to pursue the OSCE's concept of comprehensive and indivisible security.

Since 1999, the FSC's activities have expanded significantly. New topics have emerged on the FSC agenda. Topics like addressing illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition. Fostering regional implementation of UNSC resolution 1540 in support of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs. And supporting implementation of UNSC resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

All these activities shape the FSC's work today, complementing the original tasks entrusted to the Forum in 1992. One might even argue that today they encompass the most dynamic sphere of the Forum's work, where political interests converge and opportunities for fostering confidence and security exist.

In recent years, we have seen a significant increase in FSC engagement with our field operations. One example is the expansion of FSC practical assistance on small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition, and on UNSC resolution 1540. And due to the cross-

dimensional nature of security challenges such as terrorism, mass migration and others, the joint expertise of the PC and FSC is often sought.

The FSC has also enhanced its outreach to other OSCE structures, and it actively contributes to regular high-level OSCE meetings, such as the Ministerial Council and the ASRC. And increasingly it reaches out to co-operate and coordinate with international organizations, particularly the United Nations.

Please allow me to suggest a few ideas about how to further enhance the Forum's role. I will offer three concrete suggestions:

My first proposal to participating States is to consider **enhancing PC-FSC co-operation**. For example, measures to support longer-term planning between OSCE and FSC Chairmanships and the development of joint initiatives could be considered. Participating States could also consider introducing joint FSC-PC decisions on issues with overlapping or complementary mandates, such as the organization of the ASRC.

Second, participating States could consider providing our field operations more opportunities to present their work in areas relevant to the FSC mandate. Especially on assistance projects on small arms and light weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition as well as UNSC resolutions 1540 and 1325. This could help increase transparency.

Third, participating States could explore avenues for enhancing the role of the FSC Chairmanship. This could be done many ways. For example, measures to strengthen the FSC Chair's opportunities to oversee and encourage implementation of agreed commitments by participating States could be explored. This could be done by extending the duration of the FSC Chairmanship to six months. That would allow more time for long-term planning, and could help increase the Forum's impact and effectiveness.

Thank you for attention. I look forward to your contributions on this important topic.