



**Forum for Security Co-operation Security Dialogue
Transparency in military exercises and activities**

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Thank you, Mr. Chairperson

First of all, I would like to thank the Armenian FSC Chairmanship for inviting me to take part in this Security Dialogue. I'm delighted for this opportunity to return to the FSC hall, albeit virtually, and to see many familiar faces, including friends.

As the Forum provides a platform where we can share our experiences and raise concerns, I would like to share with you our experience in planning military exercises and other activities. The planning of military exercises is carried out annually by the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Armenia on a basis of combat readiness requirements. In accordance with the relevant order of the Chief of the General Staff, planning activities begin in the third quarter of the year for the period of the next calendar year. Organizational directives, including on the level, scenario, scope, participants, and those responsible for the planning and the conduct of the exercises are communicated to military units through the chain of command. Based on the responses received from the military units, the timing of the particular military exercises is determined. The annual plan of military exercises, including the character and tasks (operational, tactical), level of participation (company, battalion, regiment, brigade, army corps), type (table-top, command post, field training, live exercise), as well as scenarios (offensive, defensive, counter-offensive) is prepared by the Main Operations Department of the General Staff, and then approved by both the Chief of the General Staff and the Minister of Defence.

Armenia is committed to ensuring transparency of all its military exercises and activities. In general, Armenia does not conduct military exercises that are subject to notification in accordance with the provisions of the Vienna Document. However, in a spirit of transparency and as a confidence-building measure, Armenia annually notifies one major exercise in line with VD Plus Decision No. 9/12 on Prior Notification of Major Military Activities. This year,

the Delegation of Armenia to the FSC has already provided relevant information in accordance with VD Plus Decision 9/12.

Mr. Chairman,

The security situation in the OSCE area has deteriorated sharply in recent years, including due to the large number of unnotified large-scale military exercises near the borders of neighbouring States and conflict zones, which inevitably lead to undermining confidence, increasing the perception of threats and risks of unintended or even intentional consequences, including escalation of tensions. Modern weapons technology, complex security environment and greater integration with other agencies are some of the other factors that determine the nature of the exercise and increase the threat level. Recent experience has revealed some new factors that determine the level of threat of military exercises and certain military activities in OSCE area, such as the use of foreign capabilities, including troops and highly sophisticated weapon systems, command control and communications, including delegating the command of own troops to foreign Generals. These are questions that will require lengthy discussions at a later stage.

I believe colleagues will agree that the OSCE region continues to face a wide range of challenges to peace, security and stability, which are largely caused by the lack of transparency in military activities. There are widely diverging and conflicting positions on the root causes of the challenges to the European security architecture and on the ways to restore diminished trust, confidence and predictability.

Today, I would like to elaborate on these issues in more detail, and I will focus on three particular points.

First, the OSCE acquis, which includes specific commitments on military transparency.

Second, the implications of the lack of transparency of military exercises and activities for peace and security.

Third, the way forward to restore confidence, military transparency and predictability.

I would like to return briefly to the historic documents of the OSCE, which include a set of interlinked and mutually reinforcing principles and commitments aimed at ensuring military transparency.

Transparency and predictability in military activities as a confidence-building measure have a certain potential for early warning and conflict prevention. This set of the first confidence- and security-building measures as defined in the Helsinki Final Act guided the CSCE/OSCE process from the outset.

It is important to recall that the initial thresholds for prior notification of military exercises, which were defined in the Helsinki Final Act, have changed over time. There is a long track record of compliance with the notification regime, dating back to the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the 1986 Stockholm Document and the Vienna Document of 1990.

The Vienna Document 2011 and its first version of 1990 are often viewed in the OSCE as the “third generation” of confidence- and security-building measures, following the initial set of CSBMs of the Helsinki Final Act and the “second generation” of the Stockholm Document.

Under Chapter V of the Vienna Document 2011 on Prior Notification of Major Military Activities, participating States have committed to notify 42 days in advance of any military activity, whenever it involves, at any time during the activity:

- 9,000 troops, including support troops,
- 250 battle tanks,
- 500 ACVs,
- 250 self-propelled and towed artillery pieces, mortars and multiple rocket launchers.

Further, Chapter VI on Observation of Certain Military Activities provides for the observation of military activities with a single operational command whenever:

- the number of troops engaged equals or exceeds 13,000,
- the number of battle tanks engaged equals or exceeds 300,
- the number of armoured combat vehicles engaged equals or exceeds 500,
- the number of self-propelled and towed artillery pieces, mortars and multiple rocket launchers (100 mm calibre and above) engaged equals or exceeds 250.

Finally, in the absence of any notifiable military exercise or military activity in a calendar year, VD Plus Decision No. 9/12 provides for notification of one major military exercise or military activity.

As we can see, the two chapters of the Vienna Document mentioned earlier and VD Plus Decision No. 9/12 have common goals, and if implemented in good faith, they can play an important role in strengthening comprehensive and co-operative security in the OSCE area of responsibility.

And this brings me to my **second** point regarding the implications of the lack of transparency of military exercises and activities for peace and security in the OSCE region.

In terms of transparency, the Vienna Document provides, *inter alia*, for the Annual Exchange of:

- military information of participating States about their armed forces, including military organization, personnel and major weapons and equipment systems;
- existence of a mechanism for consultation and co-operation regarding any unusual and unplanned activities of their military forces outside their normal peacetime

- locations, which are militarily significant and hazardous incidents of a military nature in order to dispel concerns and misinterpretations;
- prior notification of certain military activities and their observation, as well as exchange of annual calendars of military activities subject to prior notification.

All of these mechanisms deal with military exercises, having in mind the level of threat that one participating State can pose and another participating State can perceive. Hence, the factors that determine the level of threat perception are of great importance for ensuring confidence, security and stability. It is important to bear in mind that the OSCE concept of common and indivisible security envisages that one participating State or group of States should not strengthen their security at the expense of the security of others.

Ensuring transparency of military exercises and activities, especially in conflict or crisis situations, can reduce the threat of the use of force and consequently contribute to greater stability and security in the OSCE area. Any threat or use of force is a challenge to peace and security in the entire OSCE area, which can have a domino effect and may be viewed by some as a legitimate means to resolve conflicts or crises. In recent years, large-scale military activities near border areas and unnotified military exercises have created an atmosphere of mistrust and uncertainty. However, unnotified military activities do not exist in a vacuum. In this regard, it is important to emphasize that the deliberate and systematic refusal to notify military exercises and activities was one of the components of preplanned use of force and war of aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh and its people.

Armenia has been vocal about the direct link between the large-scale military exercises conducted in violation of Chapter V of the Vienna Document and the likelihood of the use of force. We have repeatedly drawn the attention of the participating States on the fact that the continued and deliberate refusal to notify large-scale military exercises, including joint tactical exercises, coupled with a significant military build-up, arms race and belligerent rhetoric constituted a real threat. The indifference of the OSCE to the arbitrary and selective implementation of the Vienna Document ultimately served as a 'green light' for launching a war in our region.

Therefore, the OSCE must not lose sight of the long-term objective of restoring trust and confidence through the establishment of an effective system of checks and balances.

This brings me to **my third and final point** on the way forward to restore transparency and predictability.

I recall that during my five years' tenure in Vienna, we spent many hours, weeks and months with some of you discussing CSBMs in general and the Vienna Document in particular, considering its role in ensuring transparency, in dispelling concerns and avoiding negative

consequences, as well as assessing the need to enhance transparency and observation to cover new military capabilities and patterns of military activities.

Is there a real need to update the Vienna Document? This question remained open during all our meetings, workshops and conferences. This particular question is the result of the current challenges to the European security architecture, and over time, we will arrive to the understanding that the reason for the erosion of security and trust in our region is neither the shortcomings, nor the limitations of the Vienna Document, but rather its arbitrary and selective implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

A comprehensive implementation of existing CSBMs is more important now than ever. The OSCE and its participating States should engage in good faith to address the deficiencies in the implementation of the Vienna Document in a targeted and holistic manner.

But for this to be successful, I believe the following three factors are needed:

First - the political will. No matter how well the transparency measures may look on paper, they cannot ensure security and confidence without the political will of the participating States.

Second - military transparency must be ensured in strict compliance with international principles and commitments. In this regard, it is important to identify, discuss and address issues of non-compliance by participating States with their commitments without any political constraints.

Third - constructive dialogue is a prerequisite for preventing the erosion of the European security architecture. It can generate responses to the challenges and help rebuild trust and confidence.

In closing, I would like to express the hope that the security dialogues and discussions on this topic will continue. Emphasizing once again the importance of the full implementation of the Vienna Document, I would like to reiterate Armenia`s continued commitment to this end.