



EUROPEAN UNION
OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°903
Vienna, 19 December 2018

**EU Statement - closing of the Session under Swedish FSC
Chair**

The European Union and its Member States wish to take this opportunity to thank you, Ambassador, and your able team for the successful Chairmanship of the FSC in the past trimester. Your leadership and tireless efforts led to the adoption of the MC declaration on SALW/SCA in Milan and we thank you for this achievement.

We commend you, Madame Chairperson, for the wide range of relevant topics which you have brought to our attention during your tenure. We equally appreciate not only the choice of speakers but also the gender balance of panels. We greatly value your continued efforts to integrate the gender perspective throughout the work of the FSC, and we encourage upcoming Chairmanships to follow your excellent example.

We reiterate our strong commitment to full implementation in letter and spirit of the existing commitments in the politico-military dimension, which is essential for enhancing military transparency and political stability in the OSCE area. We remain strong supporters of Vienna Document modernisation. We welcome proposals on various Vienna Document chapters aimed at strengthening its provisions and adapting it to the current security environment, including Chapter III proposals on 'Risk Reduction'. These are examples of efforts to dispel concerns and hence strengthen confidence between OSCE participating States. We underline the importance of making progress on risk reduction and VD modernisation in 2019 and value the focused discussion of Vienna Document modernisation proposals at the FSC's Working Group A.

We emphasise the need to work towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating Conventional Arms Control and CSBMs. We value the Structured Dialogue as a meaningful, state-owned and state-driven process for in-depth exchanges on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area and we actively support it. We therefore once again thank you and the Italian OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office for proposing the draft decision on increasing military transparency, risk

reduction and incident prevention. Even though we did not reach consensus on the text at the Milan Ministerial Council, we see merit in further discussing its provisions in a constructive manner. We stand ready to continue our deliberations to this end in the FSC next year, as well as in the IWG SD.

Madame Chairperson, this closing session takes place against the backdrop of the continued blatant violation of international law and basic OSCE principles by the Russian Federation following its illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, and its destabilising actions in eastern Ukraine. The situation is all the more concerning following Russia's use of force against three Ukrainian vessels near the Kerch Strait on 25 November. We call strongly on Russia to release the captured vessels, their crew and equipment unconditionally and without delay. We expect Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage through the Kerch Strait to and from the Azov Sea, in accordance with international law. We call on all for utmost restraint to de-escalate the situation immediately. We recall our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, and call upon Russia to do likewise.

Finally, we look forward to the Swiss FSC Chairmanship next year and we would like to use this opportunity to assure our Swiss colleagues of our support throughout their tenure. We look forward to working with the delegation of Switzerland and wish their team every success.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and 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.

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