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EU Statement on the Structured Dialogue

The European Union and its Member States would like to thank the Tajik FSC Chairmanship, as well as the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship, for convening this Joint FSC/PC meeting on the Structured Dialogue. We highly value the Structured Dialogue, which are ready to develop further in accordance with the Hamburg Declaration, as a transparent, inclusive process, owned and driven by participating States, without a predetermined outcome and of high relevance for the European Union.

As this is the first joint FSC/PC meeting on this topic this year, the EU would like to take this opportunity to commend Ambassador Boender for accepting the important and challenging task of Chairing the Informal Working Group on Structured Dialogue. The EU welcomes the Chair's indicative calendar for 2019 and appreciates the intense bilateral consultations with all participating States conducted by the Chair. The excellent preparation of the meetings so far, as well as the Chair's report circulated after the eighth Informal Working Group and the fourth Expert Level Workshop, testify to the Netherlands' dedicated and professional approach to this issue.

During our discussions we and several other participating States have repeatedly reminded of the clear violations of the rules based international order. We remain deeply concerned over Russia's acts of aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. We reiterate that 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. We remain concerned about large scale and snap military exercises, the risk of unintended escalation stemming from hazardous incidents of a military nature, military activities in the vicinity of international borders without adequate transparency, as well as a selective approach to the implementation of OSCE's politico-military commitments and welcome the continued focus on these important issues during the Dutch Chairmanship of the IWG. We also look forward to further discussions on

threat perceptions, including those resulting from conflicts, certain military activities and exercises, given their relevance. We share the view that a lack of transparency and verification, including in the so-called “grey zones”, can make understanding threat perceptions more difficult. Discussions on the aspect of intent have proved useful and we support follow-on discussions on other parameters of intent.

We reiterate our strong commitment to full implementation in letter and spirit of the existing principles and commitments in the politico-military dimension, which is essential for enhancing military transparency, predictability and political stability in the OSCE area. Important agreements in this area, including the Vienna Document, the Open Skies Treaty, and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe have provided us with important security gains for many years. We remain strong supporters of the Vienna Document modernisation and note the continuous and overwhelming support for urgent action to substantially modernise the Vienna Document.

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. We were encouraged by the continued support for and commitment to the Structured Dialogue expressed by participating States in the March and May IWG meetings. The Structured Dialogue, as a capital-based format, has become a key part of our work in the OSCE and we are convinced we should continue in this endeavour. It is important that together we work towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating Conventional Arms Control and CSBMs, as we all agreed in the Hamburg Declaration.

We support the focused discussion on transparency, risk reduction and incident prevention in the eighth IWG Structured Dialogue meeting, which allowed for a more thorough reflection on these topics and discussion on sharing best practices among participating States. Moreover, the fourth Expert Level Workshop provided further opportunities for a deeper exchange of views at the expert level on transparency instruments, predictability, incident prevention and management, and best practices, in an effort to reduce the overall risks associated with certain military activities.

We note that the lively discussions in the 8th IWG meeting generated many concrete and divergent proposals, a number of which merit further elaboration. In particular, we see merit in further discussion of: 1) continuing expert level exchanges and military-to-military contacts within the Structured Dialogue; 2) voluntary templates for voluntary briefings on certain military activities and exercises; and 3) sharing best practices on the prevention and management of military incidents among participating States. We emphasise however that voluntary measures are not a substitute for full implementation by all OSCE pS, in let-

ter and spirit of existing politico-military commitments, and the importance of reciprocity in rebuilding trust and confidence.

We look forward to all participating States engaging constructively on these topics in the forthcoming special session of the Structured Dialogue at the Annual Security Review Conference.

Mr. Chairman, we thank you for the opportunity to exchange views on this important topic. We would like to use this opportunity to assure Ambassador Boender of our continued support and once again thank him and his able team for the excellent work in fulfilling this challenging task.

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

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