



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement at the Forum for Security Cooperation – Permanent Council Joint Session

As delivered by Harry Kamian, Chargé d'affaires
May 29, 2019

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

First, allow me to recognize Ambassador Boender for his efforts to advance the Structured Dialogue this year and to second his assessment that the initial session of 2019 was a clear demonstration that the guiding principles set forth in the Hamburg Agreement are alive and well. As all who participated in the plenary exchanges noted, the SD is a useful forum for discussion of a wide range of security issues. I applaud, in particular, the Dutch chair's decision to structure the discussions to give maximum time for interventions by participating States through limiting introductory presentations. This approach ensures that the SD is driven by nations, not by the agendas of think tanks. It also facilitates constructive and robust discussions.

We found the May SD exchange on the threat of terrorism both insightful and rich. The variety of interventions was helpful, ranging from presentations on which departments and agencies involved in a whole-of-government approach have the lead in responding to specific types of terrorist challenges, to presentations on how to deal with returning foreign terrorist fighters, to the challenge of prosecuting terrorist actors and the need for evidence, while also ensuring full respect for rule of law and human rights.

It is clear that we need to continue to address terrorism in the context of the SD. The May SD IWG highlighted the need for further exploration of the nexus between the trafficking of SALW; money laundering; corruption and organized crime; and terrorism. This discussion provided undeniable proof that we need to deal with the actual security challenges that countries are facing every day, even if they do not fall into easy categories.

Russia's actions in Ukraine serve as yet another example of the real security challenges facing participating States today. Russia has failed to implement the

commitments it made when it signed the Minsk agreements, which call for an immediate ceasefire, the disarmament of illegal groups, and the withdrawal of foreign armed formations. We again reaffirm our unwavering commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Crimea is part of Ukraine, and the United States does not, and will never, recognize Russia's attempted annexation of the Crimean peninsula.

Looking ahead to the fall, the United States is ready to contribute to a similarly rich and diverse discussion of hybrid threats, which are potent, and ongoing, affecting governments and civil society, including all our citizens. This is not a purely military, economic, or civil society problem. It is a challenge in all these dimensions. The SD is an opportunity to highlight issues that are undermining peace and security for all of the Euro-Atlantic community. It is clear that hybrid activities are among the issues at the very top of this list.

Hybrid actions thrive in the shade – it is time to discuss these issues openly. We encourage all participating States to come to the September SD prepared to share their experiences of hybrid actions that have affected their societies, including but not limited to those that have the trappings of conventional conflict. It seems to us that it should be possible to identify specific areas for further reflection in future sessions, potentially at the expert level. For example, it might be helpful to have follow-on sessions that focus on sharing national practices for how pS respond to hybrid threats to civil institutions, versus government institutions, versus military forces. A separate but important discussion could focus on military conflict and hybrid threats. We look forward to the side event at the ASRC, hosted by Georgia, on hybrid threats and the protracted conflicts.

At the May IWG, the need to rebuild military transparency and promote risk reduction was high on nations' agendas, occupying more than the allotted session simply because so many pS had observations to share. We heard one lesson repeated over and over again: a substantive update of the Vienna Document is the best action this organization can take to increase military transparency, reduce risks, and prevent incidents. A substantive update of the Vienna Document that includes measures to address some of the prevailing threats identified in the SD would be a significant step in the right direction. We should make it a goal to achieve by the end of this year.

By contrast, we believe best practices are not real commitments and will only take us so far. A code of conduct would not mitigate the majority of military incidents – and we learned from experts attending the SD last year that there have not in fact been many military incidents in total – because most of these

are deliberate national acts. Developing codes of conducts and best practices is not a good use of resources when we have a proven, alternative course that will produce results. We can work together to agree on a balanced package of fully reciprocal, mandatory measures that will in fact reduce risk by increasing military transparency and facilitating information sharing. If we are to rebuild military transparency in Europe, we should focus on implementing current VDoc provisions, and modernizing the Vienna Document where that is needed. Working outside that framework is not value-added and only serves to distract.

We should continue our mil-to-mil experts' exchanges, including on the margins of future IWG sessions. We see particular value in deepening our dialogue on force posture, and clarifying the objectives and intent of posture as a way to reduce uncertainty and address threat perceptions. Another topic identified by a number of speakers last year that offers a potentially fruitful direction for further exploration would be mil-to-mil discussion of exercise planning and goals. We should not allow exercises to fall off the map; they remain an important topic for future mil-to-mil exchanges.

We also think it would be useful to hold expert discussions that are not specifically focused on military topics. More informal discussions among delegations in Vienna on specific SD topics could help to link the SD to ongoing work in various OSCE committees and institutions.

In addition, we remain open to considering proposals that add value and are not duplicative of existing tools. For example, developing a template for voluntary briefings of military exercises is one possibility. However, discussions of this proposal and similar lines of effort should go back to the FSC for further consideration and decision. We do not believe that such steps rise to the level of a Ministerial Council decision.

Our next opportunity for a focused SD discussion on key threat concerns is at the Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) SD session. The ASRC agenda usefully focuses on Ukraine, the protracted conflicts and other crisis situations, and related political-military topics. We look forward to using this discussion to continue to address some of the key issues raised in the SD so far.

Thank you.