



Belgian Chairmanship

**LETTER FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF
THE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION
TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF SLOVENIA,
CHAIRPERSON OF THE THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Your Excellency,

As Chairperson of the Forum for Security Co-operation, it is my pleasure to inform you about the Forum's activities since the Twelfth Meeting of the Ministerial Council.

In 2005, the FSC continued to devote attention to a wide range of arms control issues, and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) and other politico-military issues. The Forum was successively chaired by Azerbaijan, Belarus and Belgium. The three chairpersons had consulted on their respective programmes, with a view to making them as coherent and mutually complementary as possible. This "ministerial-to-ministerial approach" is commendable.

The 15th AIAM was held on 8 and 9 March. In open and constructive discussions, the experts exchanged experiences, made suggestions and gave their assessments of the implementation of OSCE commitments in the field of CSBMs. While the main focus was a detailed review of implementation of the Vienna Document 1999, all the other FSC politico-military commitments were also addressed.

One delegation picked up on one of those suggestions and introduced in the FSC a proposal concerning counting of the 12-hour period during evaluation visits in the Vienna Document 1999. Negotiations on the proposal are not easy and will need to be continued.

The Forum agreed to the text of a statement by the Chairperson of the FSC on "prior notification of major military activities" below the notification thresholds of the Vienna Document 1999 (FSC.JOUR/467), concluding a process of two years of extensive consultations. This statement was complemented by written statements of two delegations (FSC.JOUR/467). The Chairperson's statement is a modest but an important step in the context of CSBMs aimed at enhancing openness and transparency. Implementation of this voluntary measure will be assessed during the regular annual implementation assessment meetings (AIAMs).

Furthermore, the Forum agreed in 2005 (FSC.DEC/3/05 and 4/05) to hold a high-level seminar on military doctrine on 14 and 15 February 2006. The agenda focuses on discussions

of changes in doctrine and technology and their impact. The seminar aims at an active participation of the Chiefs of Defence, General Staff and senior officials.

The Forum prepared its contribution to the Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC), held on 21 and 22 June. This contribution was offered as a guideline to the keynote speakers, in particular those in the segment devoted to the politico-military aspects of security, under the title comprehensive security.

Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction was a subject of great interest to the Forum in 2005. A special meeting on this subject organized by the Chairperson was held on 15 June. Aware of the supportive role of the OSCE in this field and conscious of the need to avoid duplication of efforts, several tracks were suggested by delegations. One was chiefly concerned with finding ways to support and encourage the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), another with a possible update of the 1994 OSCE Principles Governing Non-Proliferation. The possibility of a comprehensive political declaration on non-proliferation was also discussed.

Given the ever shortening timeframe before the Ljubljana ministerial, the 1540 track was pursued exclusively. The Forum took a decision on 30 November (FSC.DEC/7/05) to encourage dialogue, also in the Forum, on how to support implementation of UNSC resolution 1540, and to examine the possible recommendations of the 1540 Committee.

Implementation work on the OSCE Documents on Small Arms and Light Weapons (2000) and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition (2003) received considerable attention.

Progress reports on both issues have been submitted to the Ministerial Council under references MC.GAL/4/05 and MC.GAL/5/05.

In 2005, several participating States made new requests for assistance, including requests aiming at the destruction of dangerous surpluses of liquid rocket fuel ("melange"). In all cases, initial assessment of the request has taken place. For one project (Tajikistan) implementation is under way. Several project proposals were also presented resulting from requests made in 2003 and 2004.

Raising awareness regarding the safety and security risks posed by stockpiles of conventional ammunition remains a key challenge. To this end, the Chairperson of the Forum, addressed the winter session of the Parliamentary Assembly.

Another implementation measure is the development of best practice guides by a number of delegations.

Issues relating to small arms and light weapons (SALW) will remain on the agenda of the Forum. We continue to actively follow up on the implementation of the OSCE Document on SALW and consider a contribution to the review conference on the UN Programme of Action on the illicit trade in SALW, scheduled to take place in New York in July 2006. In this context, some delegations mentioned improvement of national implementation and shoring up export controls.

The security dialogue function of the Forum was extensively used. Some participating States informed on their defence policies. The Chairperson arranged for presentations on topical issues related to the current agenda, such as SALW and non-proliferation.

The tenth year of existence of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security was one of the main motivations for the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) to sponsor a workshop to take stock of the Code's substance and implementation. The Forum welcomed this workshop, held in January 2005. Papers by several delegations have served to bring points introduced during the workshop to the Forum's attention. Discussions on proposals to hold the fourth follow-up conference in 2006, revealed general willingness to reach consensus on a decision, comprising dates and agenda.

The Forum has made its contribution to the OSCE Border Security and Management Concept (FSC.DEL/446/05/Rev.1) in line with the tasking received from the Twelfth Ministerial Council (MC.DEC/2/04).

The Forum has engaged further in activities outside the confinements of its weekly meetings. In addition to the presentation to the Parliamentary Assembly mentioned above, the FSC Chairperson helped to represent the OSCE at the The Second Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Two first-time developments concerning the Partners for Co-operation are particularly noteworthy. A side event was held during the ASRC, aimed at promoting dialogue and co-operation in the politico-military sphere. The Forum met on 23 November in the format of 66 countries united around one table, around one theme (in this case the illicit trade in SALW).

On co-operation with other international organizations, it was agreed that information-sharing should be pursued more systematically, while options for co-operation or co-ordination of efforts with other international actors could be examined on a case-by-case basis.

The Forum expanded its co-operation with the Permanent Council through joint meetings and presentations by several chairpersons of informal groups of friends on thematic issues. Furthermore, the briefings (four) by representatives of OSCE field presences to the Forum were considered particularly useful. This practice should be continued.

The FSC's broad range of tasks in the politico-military dimension and the progress achieved in the framework of its mandate bear out its important role and demonstrate the significant contribution it has made and will continue to make to enhancing security across the OSCE area, thereby contributing to the Organization's comprehensive task.

Your Excellency, you might deem it useful to reflect these developments in the appropriate documents of the Ministerial Council.