

Forum for Security Co-operation

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Established at the Helsinki Summit in 1992, the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) is responsible for the politico-military dimension of the OSCE. At their weekly meetings in the Vienna Hofburg Congress Centre, the representatives of the OSCE States negotiate and consult on measures aimed at strengthening security and stability in the entire OSCE area, from Vancouver to Vladivostok. The Forum's main objectives are:

- negotiation and adoption of politically binding decisions on arms control as well as disarmament and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs);
- regular consultations and intensive co-operation on matters relating to security issues;
- further reduction of the risks of threats and conflicts;

- implementation and verification of the implementation of agreed CSBMs and commitments.

In addition, the Forum takes charge of the annual Implementation Assessment Meeting, which provides a forum for discussing and clarifying information exchanged under agreed CSBMs. Contributing to the Annual Security Review Conference, preparing seminars and workshops and informing the Ministerial Council about progress achieved during the year are also among the Forum's responsibilities.

The Forum's chairmanship rotates every four months according to the alphabetical order of the OSCE participating States. In 2004, the Forum was chaired by Andorra, Armenia and Austria.

The Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) has recently taken on an increasingly diverse range of security tasks responding timely and effectively to the need to adapt tools and focus to a changing security environment and new challenges, such as the reduction of the risks posed by dangerous stockpiles of excess ammunition and the control of small arms and light weapons.

Improving security, stability and transparency. Based on its commitment to improve security, stability and transparency in the OSCE area, the Forum continued its work in 2004 on full and comprehensive implementation, timely adaptation and further development of activities related to arms control, disarmament and CSBMs. Decisions taken by the OSCE Ministerial Council in Maastricht and in Sofia, such as the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century, gave specific mandates and tasks to the FSC. The decisions underlined the Forum's key role in contributing to the Organization's overall efforts aimed at preventing and combating threats to security and stability in the OSCE area. In 2004, four drafts proposed by the Forum were adopted by the Sofia Ministerial Council.

Tackling dangerous stockpiles of ammunition and small arms and light weapons. Surplus stockpiles of ammunition and small arms and light weapons (SALW) left over from the Cold War pose a significant threat to the population, infrastructure and environment of many OSCE countries. Often poorly guarded, they can also become a general security threat should they fall into the hands of terrorists.

The OSCE Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition and the Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons provide participating States with a framework for requesting or giving assistance to secure or destroy such stockpiles. Finding an adequate response to the requests presents a new challenge to the FSC and to the OSCE.

Requests for assistance in securing or disposing of surplus stockpiles of ammunition were presented by Ukraine, Belarus, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and, most recently, by Kazakhstan.



Reuters/Carlos Barria

A special meeting on 29 September to examine the problems, technical means and managerial and financial resources required to address the surplus stockpiles revealed the magnitude and urgency of the issue. It became clear that substantive efforts by donors were necessary to respond to the requests. Intensive consultations



James Cox, Chief Arms Control Delegate of the US Mission to the OSCE, at the Forum for Security and Co-operation in Vienna

helped to clarify the next steps, such as the preparation of assessment missions, for example to the Kaliningrad Oblast.

Belarus, Tajikistan and recently Kazakhstan submitted requests for assistance to secure or destroy excess stockpiles of SALW. Deliberations in the FSC and initiatives of participating States led to a series of measures comprising assessment visits to Belarus and Tajikistan and, in the case of Belarus, to a decision of the Permanent Council and the preparation of detailed project plans.

Raising public awareness about the underlying threat to public security as well as international co-operation will be necessary to ensure that the required means can be provided by donor countries and that the most efficient solutions can be applied.

Assessing the OSCE's work on security issues. The Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) was established by the Porto Ministerial Council in 2002 as "a framework for enhancing security dialogue and for reviewing security work undertaken by the OSCE and its participating States". The Forum was tasked to make important contributions to this review of the politico-military dimension of the OSCE, which is necessary to assure the timely adaptation of tools to the changing security environment. The second ASRC took place in June and focused on terrorism, border security as well as strategic security and on the way forward. It produced more than 100 proposals aimed at further improving security co-operation among participating States.

An essential task of the Forum is to assess participating States' implementation of their numerous commitments concerning CSBMs contained in the Vienna Document 1999 and in other relevant FSC decisions to assure compliance of all participating States. The 14th Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting organized by the Forum in March enabled a complete review of all implementation measures, producing some 40 proposals aimed at further improving the transparency and relevance of the military information exchanged. Several of the proposals have already been implemented.

Combating terrorism. The Forum's contribution to the fight against terrorism is notably reflected in the adoption of three key documents on:

- OSCE Principles for Export Controls of Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS);
- OSCE Principles on the Control of Brokering in Small Arms and Light Weapons; and
- Standard Elements of End-User Certificates and Verification Procedures for Small Arms and Light Weapons Exports.

These documents represent important tools in preventing the proliferation of portable anti-aircraft missiles and other small arms and light weapons to illegal markets and terrorists. Other decisions adopted by the Forum include a revised questionnaire on antipersonnel landmines and explosive remnants of war as well as an update of the internal communications system that allows the direct exchange of military information between participating States.

Maintaining a dialogue on security questions. The Security Dialogue is an essential and dynamic tool of the Forum for Security Co-operation. A regular feature on the agenda of FSC meetings, it represents an opportunity for all participants to bring up security-related issues of a more general nature, such as the changing security environment and its consequences, new developments in defence policy or in military doctrine, and cross-dimensional aspects or new ideas for documents. In 2004, participating States and international experts addressed a broad range of items, including defence planning, reform of armed forces, international missions, terrorism and military doctrine as well as non-proliferation and stockpiles of ammunition.

Strengthening co-operation with other international bodies. The Forum invited a considerable number of experts from other international bodies to address specific security-related questions. These included presentations on anti-terrorism activities, weapons of mass destruction, the European Security and Defence Policy, European and American Defence Strategies, cross-dimensional security aspects such as links between arms imports and sustainable development as well as possible forms of inter-organizational co-operation.

Strengthening internal co-operation. Efforts were also made to further improve the co-operation with other OSCE bodies and Institutions, in particular the Conflict Prevention Centre and the Permanent Council. The Forum also further developed co-operation with the ODIHR, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, and with the Organization's field operations. To intensify involvement of the OSCE Partners for Co-operation, the Forum prepared a paper encouraging the Partner States to co-operate in the politico-military field and to implement relevant principles and confidence- and security-building measures on a voluntary basis.