

1130th FSC Meeting

***“Security Dialogue: 30 years of the Agreement on sub-regional arms control
(Art. IV Annex 1-B of the Dayton Accords)”***

Secretary General, Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu’ Remarks

Hofburg, 11 March 2026

Thank you, Madame Chair.

Distinguished delegates, Representatives of Dayton Article IV States Parties, ladies and gentlemen.

At the joint meeting of the Permanent Council and Forum for Security Cooperation on 25 February, I flagged that your work on arms control matters more than ever before.

The world has entered a new arms race. Military defence spending is rising. History tells us that this trend risks unintended escalation.

We need transparency regarding military exercises, open military-military communications channels, and arms control agreements which are *sine qua non* for comprehensive security for all.

It was acknowledgement of this reality that compelled the CSCE’s founders to come together 51 years ago.

And it was that spirit of dialogue that paved the way for historic advances on arms control in the 1980s and 90s.

Today, we mark the 30th anniversary of one of those historic agreements - the Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control, Article Four, Annex 1-B of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This milestone reminds us of the importance, and the success, of arms control instruments.

Thirty years ago, as part of the negotiations to bring the devastating conflict to an end, the Dayton Article Four State Parties made a brave and forward-looking decision.

They chose to replace mistrust with transparency; confrontation with cooperation; and unpredictability with structured and verifiable arms control.

This transformation did not take place overnight, but thirty years later we can see that their decision bore fruit.

The Agreement reduced armaments, limited heavy weapons, and established a verification regime.

More importantly, it embodied the strong political commitment of the States to achieve and maintain peace for their peoples.

From the outset, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe played a pivotal role in the formulation and implementation of this agreement.

In 1995, the Ministerial Council in Budapest adopted a decision on OSCE Action for Peace, Democracy and Stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This provided a framework for arms control negotiations and strengthened confidence and security measures.

It also led to the appointment of a Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for Article Four to assist the Parties in achieving these objectives.

I am pleased to note that Lieutenant-General Michele Torres, from Italy, who served in this capacity from 2011 to 2015, is here with us today.

From the outset, the OSCE facilitated negotiations, provided technical expertise, and guided development of a robust verification regime.

This helped translate commitments into concrete actions.

Through its support to inspections, military information exchange, armament reduction processes, and ongoing consultations,

the OSCE contributed to the effort of Parties to transform a post-conflict environment into one underpinned by transparency and military stability.

At the 2015 Ministerial Council in Basel, the OSCE transferred full ownership and responsibility for the Agreement to the Parties.

This marked a significant milestone, as a supervised stabilization measure transitioned to a mature, regionally managed arms control regime.

Since then, the OSCE has remained engaged with the Parties and remains a vital facilitator of their ongoing commitment.

The OSCE supports dialogue, provides a secure communication platform, acts as custodian of their exchanged military information, and supports the retention of institutional memory, built over three decades.

Several key lessons emerge from this experience:

- First, arms control is indispensable, even and especially at times of growing mistrust;
- Second, transparency helps build trust over time. Confidence can grow year after year as key interlocutors stay engaged and work together to implement joint commitments. It's a long-term investment;
- Third, regional solutions can be very effective. When agreements are shaped to fit local realities, they can lead to lasting and meaningful results; and
- Finally, institutional support during the initial implementation period can play a vital role.

The OSCE's early engagement, as well as its enduring work in support of Dayton Article Four highlights that a cooperative security arrangement can flourish despite very challenging circumstances that led to its adoption.

Today our broader framework for Arms Control is severely challenged by the devastating war in Ukraine, as well as increasing distrust and military build-up across the region.

Dayton Article Four stands as a critical reminder of how commitment to stability, verification, dialogue and security-building can produce a resilient environment conducive to peace.

This lesson must not be lost on us today.

My congratulations to all the States Parties for this remarkable achievement.

The OSCE stands ready to continue supporting you in this endeavour.

Thank you.