



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°986 Vienna, 22 September 2021

EU Statement on “Risks and challenges to security”

The European Union and its Member States would like to thank the Chairmanship and key-note speakers for this useful opportunity to discuss and assess “risks and challenges to security”. We appreciated last week’s discussions on the OSCE’s Framework for Arms Control. These topics have also featured in the Structured Dialogue; they are relevant for our work, and today is a good occasion to deepen our exchange.

As mentioned in our statement last week, since adopting the Lisbon framework our political landscape has undergone a fundamental shift. We are deeply concerned by the gradual and persistent deterioration of the security environment in the OSCE area, which is due to recurrent violations of international law as well as breaches of OSCE principles and commitments. This trend must be reversed without delay. The EU Member States remain ready and call on all pS to contribute to restoring trust and increasing mutual confidence within the OSCE region. To that end, we promote full implementation of the existing commitments in the politico-military area.

The concept note for today’s security dialogue refers to significant changes in the conventional military sphere that have taken place since 1996. These changes have affected military capabilities in a way that is not captured by the OSCE arms control architecture. In addition, the use of below the threshold of conflict activities has further weakened the security environment and contributes to eroding trust in the OSCE area.

In order to start rebuilding trust and confidence among participating States, transparency is key. Confidence and Security-Building Measures were designed to prevent conflicts by reducing risks through increased transparency and military-to-military contacts. All participating States should fully implement agreed CSBMs, provide comprehensive, adequate and accurate information about their military forces, activities and exercises, should engage in a cooperative manner and provide answers to legitimate requests for explanation and clarification. Transparency is even more important in these times, as verification activities in the field of arms control and CSBMs have been, and to some extents still are, on hold due to the pandemic. We welcome that a number of participating States have already resumed verification activities, accompanied by appropriate protective measures. We hope that this will encourage all participating States to resume verification activities without unnecessary delay.

In keeping pace with the changes in the security environment, as well as technological and doctrinal developments in the military sphere, we continue to support a substantial update and modernisation of the Vienna Document, as well as further development of the Conventional Arms Control (CAC), Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) and other instruments in the politico-military area. In addition, it is important to remember that our current acquis in the field of arms control was not designed with a gender sensitive approach in mind. As we have clearly stated last week, we believe that an assessment of conventional arms control today should aim to fully implement UNSCR 1325 and its follow-up resolutions, where relevant and applicable, without turning a blind eye to the implementation gap that unfortunately still exists.

We value the usefulness of the Structured Dialogue as a platform for in-depth exchanges on politico-military issues as well as on security threats and challenges of most concern to OSCE participating States, including new strategic challenges discussed in the Informal Working Group. It is important to continue best practice discussions on risk reduction measures, enhancing transparency and on practical tools and mechanisms for incident prevention and management to minimise risks and reduce potential for escalation.

Mr. Chair, we remain open to a meaningful dialogue on how to reduce risk of conflict, increase trust among OSCE participating States and contribute to greater openness and transparency in the field of military planning and activities. We call on all participating States to engage constructively in these discussions.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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