

HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS AT ARMS CONTROL SYMPOSIUM

22 November 2011, Military School

Deputy Minister of Defence Starova,
Honoured guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here today, joining you for the opening of this symposium on such a valuable initiative.

As Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, I would like to re-emphasize the fact that the issue of arms control is of the greatest significance and importance.

Indeed, I would even go as far to say that this question hits at the very centre of my own Organization, the OSCE, which I am proud to represent in this country.

From its very beginning, the OSCE, then as the Conference of Security and Co-operation in Europe, has been engaged in this area - a key issue when international security is on the table.

However, this event today takes the issue onto a regional level as it is organized by the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre working in the South Eastern Europe.

The OSCE is, first of all, a regional security organization, dealing with security issues by promoting greater regional understanding.

So, in reading today's agenda, it seems that most of the topics to be discussed are directly 'core OSCE business'.

Therefore, I would like to express my appreciation for this opportunity to highlight the importance of this matter once again.

Some twenty years after the end of the Cold war, the issue of arms control may for the wider public seem rather boring and already dealt with.

It may even be thought that it is outdated and that some other issues are more salient and useful to be addressed.

The contrary, in fact, is the case.

Still far too many weapons of all types continue to be stockpiled and disseminated throughout the OSCE area.

And potentially all weapons are dangerous, put individual and collective security at risk.

This is the reason why the OSCE from its very beginnings has adopted a set of documents that help participating States achieve a more secure and safe environment through the means of arms control.

It is also not possible to speak about arms control in the *OSCE area* without mentioning two significant tools: the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the 1992 Treaty on Open Skies.

While these two major documents are not OSCE documents as such, they were prepared and signed under the OSCE umbrella.

By recalling all these reference documents, let me draw your attention to two specific points:

First, the OSCE has a key role in providing the right instruments to help the participating States fulfil their commitments in the field of arms control.

Second, the OSCE adopts a broad and comprehensive approach to security in terms of geography as well as thematic areas.

In this framework, arms control is one of the security-related issues, and a very crucial one.

Deputy Minister of Defence Starova,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am sure we all subscribe that security is indivisible.

Therefore arms control remains important for the maintenance of peace and stability as a politico-military issue.

We cannot afford to forget at any time our ultimate goal stipulated in the UN Charter "To maintain international peace and security".

The comprehensive nature of security in the OSCE area brings me to recall some basic principles that I believe are worthy of some brief mention here.

Firstly, we seek to enhance international security by promoting openness, transparency and co-operation amongst participating States.

Our common challenge is security, and more specifically co-operative security.

The OSCE occupies a unique place in the realm of international security organizations.

The Organization's strength is drawn from its capacity and relevance to deal with arms control.

Secondly, South Eastern Europe is a region with many complex dynamics in terms of security.

In the context of Albania, the excessive stockpiling of surplus conventional ammunition and small arms and light weapons not properly secured or controlled still represents a considerable risk.

Since its accession to the OSCE in 1991, Albania has endorsed all OSCE Documents that pave the way to greater arms control.

In so doing, Albania has shown its clear political will to take its responsibilities on this issue seriously.

That said, much remains to be done and the OSCE Presence stands ready to assist upon request.

I wish us all a very successful symposium.

Thank you for your attention.

Ends