



Permanent Mission
of the Federal Republic of Germany to the OSCE
Vienna

Intervention by the German Delegation, Ambassador Rüdiger Bohn,
Deputy Federal Commissioner for Disarmament and Arms Control,
at the 2021 OSCE Annual Security Review Conference

Vienna, 31st August 2021

Special Session II: The Structured Dialogue

Esteemed Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,

Germany welcomes that the Annual Security Review Conference can finally take place and would like to thank everyone who helped make this possible.

We also welcome that a special session of the ASRC is again dedicated to the Structured Dialogue.

For us, the Structured Dialogue is a unique channel of communication and discussion on security and arms control issues in the OSCE area, and it serves as a Confidence and Security-Building Measure in its own right.

The last time that we all met in person in Vienna for a Structured Dialogue meeting was in September 2019 – almost two years ago. To date, a third of all meetings of the IWG Structured Dialogue have already been held online – the new normal, so to speak.

Against this backdrop, I cannot but express my great appreciation to the Spanish Chairmanship of the IWG Structured Dialogue and my deep gratitude to Ambassador Luis Cuesta in particular for aptly guiding us through this difficult endeavour. We wish Luis Cuesta all the best back home in Madrid.

For the rest of us: I hope that we will be able to meet in person again very soon at the Wiener Hofburg – the place where both the OSCE and the Structured Dialogue historically belong. Face-to-face talks and informal contacts remain crucial for engaging in meaningful dialogue.

The last SD session's highly interactive and extremely thoughtful debate on the Lisbon Framework for Arms Control showed the high level of interest that many participating States take in current European security architecture, as well as their great commitment to this matter.

Germany is looking forward to continuing this interesting debate at the next Structured Dialogue meeting in capitals format, as well as at the Forum for Security Co-operation under the Austrian Chairmanship.

And there is enough to do in this regard. From our current vantage point, the entire architecture of cooperative security in the Euro-Atlantic region is about to fall apart.

Russia's decision to withdraw from the Open Skies Treaty has been merely the most recent wake-up call. Prior to this, Russia had unilaterally suspended its participation in the CFE; verification of arms control and CSBM agreements is currently still suspended by many participating States due to COVID-19; and the Vienna Document has not been adapted for ten years.

What does that mean for the Structured Dialogue, as a process?

Unfortunately, we cannot conclude that – 30 years after the Cold War ended – arms control and CSBMs are no longer needed. I think we all agree that, in recent years, the security environment in the OSCE area has experienced a negative trend.

Tensions are growing, while transparency, predictability and trust are declining. These developments are also increasingly being noticed and discussed in the Structured Dialogue.

However, we are stuck in analysing the current security challenges, without drawing conclusions about what to do. I think it is time to take the next step. What we need are new and fresh recipes for military confidence building and risk reduction that match today's security challenges.

The Structured Dialogue can serve as a catalyst for this process. We have already got the ball rolling by debating the crucial topic of transparency, risk reduction and incident prevention, both in the Informal Working Group and at the level of our military experts. These discussions have been extremely helpful.

But the Structured Dialogue can potentially do more – it can be a more comprehensive process that takes into account the erosion of existing agreements, the geopolitical shifts of recent years, and the latest developments in military strategies, technology, capabilities, doctrines and force posture.

We know from history that such developments will not fall from the sky. They come about through years of thoughtful consideration and painstaking groundwork by experts and diplomats. It is time to use the full potential of the Structured Dialogue.

Thank you very much.