



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°887
Vienna, 20 June 2018**

EU Statement on Regional Security Cooperation

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome the guest speakers to the Forum for Security Co-operation and thank them for their presentations. We commend the Slovenian FSC Chairmanship for the attention given to the topic of regional security and defence cooperation. In this context, we reaffirm the importance of the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act concerning the inherent right of sovereign states to choose whether or not they belong to international organisations, bilateral or multilateral treaties, or treaties of alliance.

We appreciate the opportunity to listen to lessons learnt from regional military cooperation, especially about the Multinational Land Force (MLF) and the Balkan Medical Task Force (BMTF). We also appreciate the presentation on SEESAC's gender mainstreaming projects in the Western Balkans. Strengthening regional cooperation in the area of security and defence is important given the deterioration in the European security environment and emerging security challenges. Such efforts can complement existing multilateral conventional arms control and CSBM instruments and the collaboration within traditional international and regional frameworks, such as NATO and the European Union, and can serve as an example for others.

In the European Union, we follow a similar approach. Key challenges to peace and stability continue to underscore the need for the EU to adapt and increase its capacities as a security provider. To the East, the European security order has been violated by the Russian Federation, and to the South, terrorism and violence plague North Africa and the Middle East, and additional current security challenges originate from instability in the EU's immediate neighbourhood and the changing forms of threats. It was in this context that the EU Global Strategy was developed and presented in June 2016. Building on the progress made in the first year of implementing the EU Global Strategy, EU Member States agreed to add two new priorities for its implementation: supporting global governance and the United

Nations in particular, and continuing to strengthen cooperation in all priority fields, including security and defence.

In the context of closer cooperation in security and defence Member States agreed to step up the European Union's work in this area and acknowledged that enhanced coordination, increased investment in defence and cooperation, and in developing defence capabilities are key requirements to achieve it. In this context the new Military Planning and Conduct Capability for EU military training and advisory missions has become a reality, as well as the coordinated annual review of national defence budgets, and a Permanent Structured Cooperation on Security and Defence (PESCO) was established. The aim of these steps is to increase effectiveness in addressing security challenges and advancing towards further integrating and strengthening security and defence cooperation within the EU framework.

Mr. Chairman, the EU has close links with the countries of the Western Balkans. The EU's enlargement policy continues to be a strategic investment in peace, security, prosperity, and stability in Europe. We firmly believe that the prospect of EU membership continues to drive transformation and anchor stability and security in the countries aspiring to join. Good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation are essential to the stability of the region.

Both the OSCE and the UN represent natural partners for the EU in South-Eastern Europe. This is demonstrated also by the generous support provided by the EU and its Member States to the various projects, not least in the politico-military dimension, including the project in support of disarmament and arms control activities in South-East Europe implemented by SEESAC (CD 2016/2356/CFSP) worth EUR 6.5 million for the period 2017-2019.

Finally, we once again thank the speakers as well as the FSC Chairmanship for providing us with the opportunity to exchange views on this interesting topic.

The Candidate Countries, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European



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Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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