



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°972 Vienna, 21 April 2021

EU Statement at the Opening Session of the Armenian FSC Chairmanship

The European Union and its Member States congratulate Armenia on assuming the FSC Chairmanship. We warmly welcome H.E Mr. Ara Aivazian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia to the FSC and thank him for outlining the Chair's priorities and for presenting his views on the current security challenges in the OSCE area.

We would like to use this opportunity to thank once again the outgoing Chair, United States of America, for an excellent cooperation during the last uneasy trimester. We also wish to bid farewell to Germany who has left the FSC Troika and welcome Austria as a new Troika member.

Your Excellency, we share your assessment that the resolution of all the conflicts in our region should remain a top priority for the OSCE, including for the FSC. We believe that we, in the OSCE, should make better use of its toolbox, including early warning and early action, dialogue facilitation and mediation, and post-conflict rehabilitation, in line with OSCE Vilnius MC Decision 3/11.

Armenia assumes the lead of this Forum at a difficult time of not only simmering but even escalating politico-military tensions on our continent, with conflicts claiming a high toll of human lives as was the case in the recent hostilities in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and as we see it on a weekly basis when discussing security situation in and around Ukraine.

In the OSCE area we continue to be confronted with blatant violations of international law and basic OSCE principles. Consequently, transparency and mutual confidence which constitute the basis of our work are currently in short supply. We therefore call on the participants of this Forum to continue to keep focused on these key challenges and to work together to enhance our security and reduce the risk of conflict in the OSCE region. In this context, we thank Armenia for co-chairing last week, together with Sweden, the joint PC-FSC meeting upon the request of the delegation of Ukraine, in accordance with paragraph 16.3 of the Vienna Document.

We welcome the activation of the risk reduction mechanism of the Vienna Document by Ukraine and regret that the Russian Federation failed to provide necessary information to answer the legitimate concerns raised by many other participating States about its unusual military activities at the Ukrainian borders and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. We encourage the Russian Federation to re-consider this approach, seriously consider the recommendations put forward by the participating States at last week's joint PC-FSC meeting and take all necessary steps for de-escalation. In this regard, it is also key to refrain from actions and rhetoric that lead to heightened tensions.

Our position on Russia's acts of aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, which we strongly condemn and do not recognise, is well known. We will continue raising this blatant violation of international law and OSCE commitments in the relevant international fora, including in the FSC.

We look forward to the Security Dialogue on Arms Control and Confidence and Security Building Measures and on transparency in military exercises and activities. These are very topical issues. The full implementation, both in letter and spirit, of existing commitments in the politico-military dimension is of crucial importance for enhancing military transparency and political stability in the OSCE area. The refusal to engage in a constructive dialogue held in a framework of a previously agreed

consultative mechanism, is a manifestation of disregard for basic principles of this organization. It does not help prevent misunderstandings among participating States and undermines the value of the Vienna Document. It also highlights the need for its substantial update.

Our position on the Vienna Document has been consistent. We support its substantial modernisation, as well as the further development of Conventional Arms Control, Confidence and Security Building Measures and other instruments. The update and modernisation of our OSCE politico-military toolbox, in particular the Vienna Document, is vital and we urge all participating States to engage actively and constructively in these important discussions, taking due account of all VD modernisation proposals on the table, including the joint proposal supported by 34 participating States.

At the same time, we want to recall the Ministerial commitment of all participating States in Hamburg 2016 to work towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating arms control and Confidence and Security-Building Measures in Europe. We value the Structured Dialogue as a meaningful, transparent, inclusive, state-owned and state-driven process for in-depth exchanges on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area and we will continue to actively support it.

We are pleased to see that the implementation of UNSCR 1325 has become a regular topic of each FSC Chairmanship. Gender equality is a cross-cutting issue covering all dimensions, including security, and a priority for the EU within the OSCE.

Mr. Chair, we also look forward to discussing the implementation of UNSCR 1540 and practical assistance mechanisms in relation to SALW projects. The EU and its Member States attach great importance to reducing the threat posed by the illicit trafficking and excessive accumulation of SALW and conventional ammunition.

We also note with interest your intention to devote a joint FSC-PC meeting to the topic of trends and challenges in preventing and combatting terrorism. Terrorism is a major

threat to peace, stability and security, as well as to the enjoyment of human rights in the OSCE area and beyond.

We value the work of this Forum and hence it is essential that all participating States engage genuinely and in a result-oriented manner in the discussions, including on topics one disagrees with. Moreover, our discussions should continue to be held in a constructive tone, in these meetings as well as elsewhere, offline and online.

Mr. Chair, we would like to use this opportunity to assure you of our support for your FSC Chairmanship. We look forward to working with you and wish you and your team every success.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN, 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 and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.