



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°980 Vienna, 23 June 2021

EU Statement on Transparency in Military Exercises and Activities

The European Union and its Member States thank the speakers for their presentations and the Armenian FSC Chairmanship for organising the Security Dialogue on such an important and timely topic.

Military transparency is essential at all times, but even more so in the current climate, where the security situation in the OSCE area has been deteriorating for many years due to recurrent violations of international law as well as breaches of OSCE principles and commitments. This trend must be reversed without delay. It is therefore of crucial importance, that all participating States fully respect and implement the obligations and commitments they have undertaken.

Unusual military activities near borders are a cause of concern for any neighbouring participating State. In situations such as these, it is essential to make full use of available formats and mechanisms to dispel these concerns and to contribute to transparency and predictability. A case in point occurred just three months ago when the Russian Federation began a large-scale military build-up along its borders with Ukraine and in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. We deplore that the Russian Federation chose not to engage meaningfully under the Risk Reduction Mechanism of the Vienna Document, invoked by Ukraine, in a clear defiance of the commitments it signed up to. We are looking forward to receiving relevant and timely information on

all major military exercises within the OSCE area, including the upcoming Belarus-Russia exercise “Zapad 2021”.

We firmly believe that the full implementation and further development of existing commitments in the politico – military dimension are essential for enhancing military transparency and political stability in the OSCE area. Confidence and Security-Building Measures were never designed to solve conflicts; however, they certainly can reduce risk through increased transparency. Transparency depends on every participating State fully and faithfully implementing agreed CSBMs, providing accurate, reliable and timely information on its military forces and activities, honestly responding to requests for explanation and exhibiting a willingness to dispel security concerns expressed by another participating State.

In this context, it is important to continue our work on the modernisation of the Vienna Document. Its key elements focus on enhancing transparency and predictability and reducing risk. These are issues, which are highly relevant during these challenging times. The EU has been and remains a strong supporter of Vienna Document modernisation. We appeal to all participating States to generate momentum for meaningful work on this at the FSC in the coming months. We once again call on Russia to reconsider its political stance with regard to the Vienna Document modernisation.

Mr. Chair, we continue to value the Structured Dialogue as a meaningful platform for in-depth exchanges on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE. Particularly, in light of the current erosion of the conventional arms control and CSBM architecture, it is important that we all work together towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating Conventional Arms Control and CSBMs, as we all agreed to in the Hamburg Declaration. We reiterate our openness to constructive dialogue and hope that all participating States are ready to do the same in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect.

We support minimising risks and reducing escalatory potential by continuing discussions on best practices related to risk reduction measures and on practical tools and mechanisms for incident prevention and management. Improving safety

and promoting risk reduction regarding military activities through appropriate OSCE confidence building measures is of the utmost importance. We encourage expert level exchanges and enhanced military-to-military contacts within the Structured Dialogue.

We believe that regular discussions of military doctrines contribute to a better understanding of the overall intent of military activities of a participating or a group of participating States. Military exercise scenarios drive actions that are designed to tackle perceived risk and threat assessments. However, some military activities may be seen as threatening or provocative. Hence, more frequent discussions of military doctrines and activities would be conducive to a better understanding of such actions.

We also see merit in the development of a template for voluntary briefings. When considering these issues, it is important to keep in mind however that voluntary measures are not a substitute for full implementation, in letter and spirit, of existing politico-military commitments by all OSCE participating States, and the importance of reciprocity in rebuilding trust and confidence.

Thank you for your attention.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, 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 and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.