



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°996
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EU Statement – Closing session under the Austrian FSC Chair

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome today **Mr. Dieter Kandlhofer**, Secretary General in the Austrian Ministry of Defence and OSCE Secretary General **Helga Schmid**. We thank both of them for their insightful presentations. We share their assessment on the importance of the work of this Forum which remains a unique regional platform for negotiations and dialogue on politico-military issues in the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok. And there is obviously still plenty of work to do.

We wish to take this opportunity to thank you, **Ambassador Raunig**, and Austria's able team for the commitment, tremendous efforts and untiring engagement in chairing the FSC in the past trimester, with special thanks to the Chairs of the Working Groups for their relentless efforts, including in the run-up to the Ministerial Council. Despite your innovative and substantive Chair's programme as well as your team's best efforts, it was not possible, for the second year in a row, to agree on any MC deliverable in the areas of work of the FSC. This is a testimony to the tense geopolitical reality we witness in Europe. We reiterate what we said last week in this Forum that the success of a Chair is not to be measured by the number of adopted texts. We value the emphasis put by the Austrian Chair on maintaining, implementing and enhancing our strong common commitments, including in the pol-mil dimension.

Mr. Chair, the current OSCE arms control framework remains, undeniably, under considerable strain. We appreciated your efforts to focus the attention of participating States on this key element of our endeavours here in Vienna. An agreement on the declaration on the Lisbon Framework for Arms Control and on the decision on the

enhancement of OSCE-wide mil to mil dialogues would have been a welcome sign of political will to move ahead in this area. Alas, this was not the case.

Our views on the OSCE politico-military toolbox are well-known. The Vienna Document needs to be modernised. In this context, we welcome the respective joint statement signed by 46 participating States in Stockholm. We need to work towards an environment conducive to reinvigorating Conventional Arms Control and CSBM commitments which should be implemented fully – in letter and spirit – by all participating States. This is essential for rebuilding trust and enhancing military transparency in the OSCE area which has lately been in short supply. In this regard, we highly value and actively support, 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.

We furthermore commend Austria for its continued attention to the OSCE's policies and projects on small arms and light weapons (SALW) and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA). Although our negotiations on the draft decision on the normative aspects of SALW and SCA were yet again not brought to a positive conclusion, the EU and its Member States remain engaged in this area, by continuing to provide expertise and financial resources for OSCE projects.

Gender quality, UNSCR 1325 and the women, peace and security agenda are particularly important to us. Those are not some secondary topics as we hear sometimes in this Forum, in particular from one delegation, but key objectives. We believe that the draft Ministerial Council Decision, submitted jointly by Austria and Sweden, on full, equal and meaningful participation of women within the armed forces would have strengthened our existing acquis, contained in the Code of Conduct, to the benefit of everyone. While regretting the lack of consensus, we thank our Austrian and Swedish colleagues for their efforts in this regard. We were pleased to see the Joint Statement on the WPS agenda endorsed by 53 participating States, which shows the increasing support for this important issue. We especially appreciate the mainstreaming of gender issues in the Security Dialogues in the last trimester and a specific discussion on the Code of Conduct in October.

Last but not least, we reiterate that the resolution of the crises and conflicts in the OSCE area is a top priority for the European Union. Russia's continuous acts of aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which we have not and will not recognise, continue to pose a major threat to our common security and rules-based international order. Let us not forget that **the respect of international law** and of **the OSCE principles and commitments**, enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris, particularly the prohibition of the use of force or threat of use of force in order to change borders, **is the best security guarantee** for all of us.

In concluding, we welcome Azerbaijan as incoming FSC Chair and assure them of our support in the next trimester.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA* and the EFTA countries ICELAND and 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.