



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°965 Vienna, 20 January 2021

EU Statement at the Opening Session of the US FSC Chairpersonship

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome the United States of America as new FSC Chair. We thank Ambassador Reeker for outlining the Chair's priorities as well as for presenting US views on the current security challenges in the OSCE area.

We would like to use this opportunity to reiterate our gratitude to the previous Chair Germany for all the efforts during the last uneasy trimester. We also wish to thank Ukraine who has left the FSC Troika and welcome Armenia as a new Troika member.

Madame Chair, the United States takes over the helm of this Forum at a special time. Later today, the 46th President will be inaugurated in Washington DC. American democratic institutions have proved their maturity and resilience in face of the recent challenges. We extend our best wishes to the upcoming administration and look forward to a further development of our cooperation on many matters we are facing together, including across the OSCE area.

The work of this Forum remains of crucial importance and it is essential that all participating States engage genuinely and constructively in the discussions, including on topics one disagrees with. We start this year in the hope that we will finally overcome the COVID pandemic. We will still face challenges and restrictions for some time as we witness through the format of today's meeting.

The resolution of conflicts in our region, including the protracted ones, remains a top priority for the European Union and should be kept high on the agenda. In the OSCE area we continue to be confronted with blatant violations of international law and basic OSCE principles. In this context, let us recall our well known

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. We remain convinced that a sustainable political solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine can only be reached through full implementation of the Minsk agreements and we once again urge the sides to comply with the commitments they have signed up to. The ceasefire in place since last July, albeit not fully respected, is a step in the right direction. The momentum should be seized for further progress within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group.

We remain committed to the full implementation, in letter and spirit, of existing commitments in the politico-military dimension. This is essential for enhancing military transparency and political stability in the OSCE area. Towards this end, we support the substantial modernisation of the Vienna Document, as well as the further development of Conventional Arms Control, Confidence and Security Building Measures and other instruments in the politico-military toolbox that continue to be under pressure. The update and modernisation of our OSCE politico-military toolbox, most notably the Vienna Document, is vital and we urge all participating States to engage both 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.

We commend the US for a clear and focused working plan for the upcoming weeks in this Forum, including the Regional Security Dialogue on NATO enhanced Forward Presence. We also look forward to open and frank exchanges at the High-Level Military Doctrine Seminar and the Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting.

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 attach great importance to enhancing peace and security in the OSCE area by reducing the threat posed by the illicit trafficking and excessive accumulation of SALW and conventional ammunition. This is underlined inter alia through our support and contribution to the OSCE's assistance projects. We regret that it was not possible in December to reach unanimous agreement on the Ministerial Decision on the normative aspects of SALW and SCA and we call on all participating States to engage in this Forum's discussions in a positive spirit this year, in order to achieve more tangible results. In this context, we look forward to the dedicated sessions next month on Small Arms Light Weapons – Man Portable Air Defence Systems, and on explosive hazards in Central Asia.

We are pleased to see that the implementation of UNSCR 1325 will be the subject of a joint FSC/PC meeting in March. Gender equality is a cross-cutting issue covering all dimensions, including security, and remains a priority for the EU within the OSCE. We regret that no consensus was reached at the last Ministerial Council on the Draft Decision on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the areas of work of the FSC but are heartened by the fact that a strong Joint Statement found the support of 52 participating States.

In conclusion, we would like to use this opportunity to assure you, Madame Chair, of our support in the upcoming trimester. We look forward to working with you and wish you and your team at the US Mission every success.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, 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.

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