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**The OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC):
Thirty years of politico-military *acquis* and contribution to
transparency and confidence-building in the
Euro-Atlantic region
1992-2022**



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**Foreword by Florian Raunig,
Permanent Representative of Austria to the OSCE
Head of Department for OSCE and Council of Europe
Ministry for European and International Affairs of Austria**

Thirty years ago the Summit in Helsinki agreed on the establishment of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) as a key decision-making body in the politico-military dimension. Created at a time when Europe saw enormous changes and risks of insecurity after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it developed into an indispensable platform to increase military security and stability on the continent. Despite all these challenges, including armed conflicts, participating States were able to develop and agree on a number of fundamental politico-military agreements, including confidence and security-building measures as well as ensuring the democratic control of military and security forces. The Forum has developed norms and provided practical assistance to address the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons, dealt with non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and overseen regular contact, co-operation, and sharing of military information among the participating States.

Since then the security landscape of Europe has undergone several phases and has tremendously changed in the recent years. Today, Europe is confronted with its most severe security crisis since the end of the Second World War. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is an unprovoked and unjustified attack on a sovereign and peaceful neighboring State. It is the most serious violation of OSCE's principles and commitments and it deeply undermines security and confidence in the OSCE area.

Furthermore, the threat of terrorism and radicalization, as well as the loss of transparency and trust between OSCE participating States, threaten our common, comprehensive security. The security environment is more complex than ever, very dynamic and marked by great interrelations and unpredictability. Classical conventional military threats and aggression, which were thought to be overcome for the most part in the OSCE area, have emerged again in new quality and created a climate of mistrust and fear. The aggravation of violent conflicts has already resulted in numerous victims in the recent years, displacements and destruction.

Diverging assessments of the causes as well as contradicting threat perceptions have led to a situation in which existing OSCE norms and principles of a politico-military nature – as stabilizing factors and core pillars of the European security architecture – eroded over the years. Well-proved instruments and mechanisms of security cooperation have been put into question or, even worse, are paralyzed due to the lack of political will.

Increased security can only be achieved by increased trust. Fostering dialogue across all dimensions has thus been one key priority of Austria in the OSCE. After thirty years since the foundation of the FSC, this is an indispensable prerequisite, in particular in the OSCE's politico-military dimension, for countering the ongoing erosion of our common security architecture. As integral parts of any inclusive, comprehensive and co-operative European security system, the instruments of disarmament, arms control and confidence- and security-building have to be strengthened to provide enhanced transparency, predictability and stability on our continent. With its themed events and proven instruments, the FSC is a unique forum for dialogue and discussion. This publication is a good example of the FSC's potential.

Once more, it has become clear that the complex and multidimensional nature of today's challenges calls for adapting our politico-military toolbox. Against the background of the ongoing large scale and disastrous war against Ukraine, an increasing number of military conflicts, the further risks of military escalation, the lack of proper communication channels, the lack of military transparency, rapid technological change and shaping of new military doctrines, this has become evident. Austria will continue using the FSC and all other OSCE platforms to promote multilateral responses to these challenges, in order to ensure political and military stability.

The OSCE, as the largest regional Organization under the United Nations, offers all parties a place for dialogue, even in difficult situations and conflicts.

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Introduction

The Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), the OSCE key decision-making body in the political and military dimension, was established thirty years ago at the Third CSCE Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Helsinki in 1992. Its creation was hailed as a major breakthrough in the politico-military sphere of security. Over the years, through dialogue, regular consultation and negotiation, the Forum has been instrumental in adopting, developing and concretely implementing a wide range of confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) and has offered a platform for broad dialogue on politico-military issues amongst participating States.

Since its inception, the FSC's activities have expanded significantly. New topics have emerged on its agenda, which shape its work today, complementing the original tasks entrusted to the Forum in 1992. The FSC's toolbox, which stretches from arms control, disarmament and CSBMs (including the exchange of military information), security co-operation and conflict prevention, countering the proliferation of conventional and non-conventional weapons, and promoting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, provides with a solid and unique contribution to the OSCE concept of comprehensive and indivisible security. This time-tested mandate and this reliable *acquis* need to be maintained and adapted to the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.



Ambassador Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal, Secretary General of the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, and Ambassador Florian Raunig, Permanent Representative of Austria to the OSCE, at the opening of the Austrian Chairpersonship of the FSC, on 8 September 2021 (Micky Kroell/OSCE)

The year 2022 is an anniversary year for the FSC. After its 1000th (“Millenium”) plenary meeting on 9 February, the participating States will celebrate the FSC’s 30th anniversary under the Belgian Chairpersonship in the third trimester of 2022. Oddly, the anniversary of this eminent body has never been properly celebrated until now. Whereas each significant milestone of the main instruments promoted by the FSC have been duly commemorated (such as the 1996 Lisbon Framework for Arms Control and the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security), the 10th anniversary of the Forum in 2002 and its 20th anniversary in 2012 went almost completely unnoticed.¹ Contrary to the OSCE as a whole, there was no “Helsinki + 10” or “+ 20” for the FSC. The first initiative to provide the Forum with the recognition it deserves came in 2017 from the Austrian Chairpersonship-in-Office and the Serbian Chair of the FSC, in form of a draft ministerial declaration on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Forum; unfortunately, this declaration could not reach consensus. Therefore, the opportunity to commemorate three decades of existence of the FSC must be duly seized, even if this anniversary happens in midst of the most serious security crisis for Europe since the end of the Second World War.

“The FSC is not only one of the two decision making bodies within the OSCE, but also one of the main veins of the Organization.”

Turkish FSC Chairpersonship: Perceptions, Lessons learned and Recommendations for future FSC Chairs, 15 April 2020

This academic study draws lessons from the past through the prism of a body which occupies a distinct place within the OSCE architecture and continues to offer a genuine platform for all OSCE participating States to address their security concerns. In a very different political context than the one which prevailed in 1992, this paper looks at three decades of history of the Forum, which mirror the history of post-Cold War and the evolution of the overall security situation in Europe. It describes the missions, agenda and normative record of the FSC, as well as the main topics on the table of the *Neuer Saal*, at the Viennese *Hofburg*. Finally, it focuses on the crisis in and around Ukraine and its impact on the Forum’s life.

¹ The 15th anniversary of the Forum was modestly marked with a series of articles (in particular, a contribution from Ambassador Barbara Gibson of Canada, Chairperson of the FSC when it marked its 500th meeting in November 2006) in *OSCE Magazine* (Oct.-Nov. 2007, pp. 20 f.).

The word of the Secretary General of the OSCE

Since its inception 30 years ago, the Forum for Security Co-operation has been at the centre of confidence and security building efforts in the OSCE region, promoting dialogue and risk reduction. As one of the two decision-making bodies of the OSCE, it remains a backbone of our Organization to this day. By fulfilling its mission and mandate, the FSC has evolved into an important mechanism for implementing OSCE norms of confidence building and transparency along with providing technical assistance in the politico-military sphere.

We are facing unprecedented challenges in the OSCE region. But the FSC has provided numerous opportunities to de-escalate and prevent conflict through continuation of dialogue. It has also recommended concrete measures for de-escalation from the Forum's toolbox – measures that all OSCE participating States have agreed to. However, it needs political will to engage and to apply these important means in good faith.

I urge the Forum for Security Co-operation to stay vigilant. Now more than ever, we need this platform for risk reduction to prevent a further deterioration of the security situation in Europe and to seek synergies and complementarity in our work across all dimensions. Though premature at this time, with a return to more stability in the region, the difficult process of rebuilding trust will have to begin. The Forum for Security Co-operation will be properly placed to embark on renewed negotiations on arms control, disarmament and CSBMs, drawing on the existing politico-military tools and lessons learned.

Helga Maria Schmid



OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid at the “Millenium” plenary meeting of the FSC, on 9 February 2022 (*OSCE Secretariat*)

1-The three ages of the FSC: Navigating from clear to trouble waters

1.1 The FSC's creation and initial mandate: The "golden age" for arms control and CSBMs

The core function of the FSC can be traced back to the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (NCSBMs) which started in March 1989 in Vienna. The Charter of Paris for a New Europe (1990), which called for "a more structured co-operation among all participating States on security matters", established a Consultative Committee providing a forum for discussion, implementation of and information exchange under agreed CSBMs, with special focus on unusual military activities.

"In the Paris Charter, we have recognized the need for a single and joint security forum, open to all participating States. Here, it will be our task to construct effective security structures for a new and uniting Europe."

Paavo Vdyrynen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, at the plenary meeting of the CSCE Council on 19 June 1991, Berlin

Two years later, based on their commitment "to give new impetus to the process of arms control, disarmament and confidence- and security-building, to the enhancement of consultation and co-operation on security matters, to furthering the process of reducing the risk of conflict [and to] consider new steps to further strengthen norms of behaviour on politico-military aspects of security",² the Heads of State and Government gathered in Helsinki in 1992 decided to establish a new CSCE Forum for Security Co-operation to carry out these tasks, further detailed in a 14-point Programme for Immediate Action annexed to Decision V of the CSCE Helsinki Document 1992. "After months of working on a mandate for the Forum during the CSCE review conference in Helsinki in 1992, we really had no idea how things would work out", Donna Phelan, a U.S. Foreign Affairs Officer who took part in the very first meeting of the FSC, remembered.³ Even so, "many observers believe that it was at this gathering that the CSCE/OSCE reached its creative peak in the politico-military dimension."⁴ Alija Izetbegovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Saparmurad Niyazov (Turkmenistan), Suleiman Demirel (Turkey), Franjo Tudjman (Croatia), Rahmon Nabiev (Tajikistan), George H.W. Bush (United States), François Mitterrand (France), Mauno Koivisto (Finland)... The names of the Heads of State and Government who attended the Helsinki Summit, thirty years ago, belong to History.

² Helsinki Summit Declaration, para. 22.

³ Donna Phelan, "Norm-setting and beyond: Creating a forum for common concerns", *OSCE Magazine*, Oct.-Nov. 2007, p. 23.

⁴ Pierpaolo Tempesta, "Negotiating dreams, from the Atlantic to the Urals", *OSCE Magazine*, Oct.-Nov. 2007, p. 22.

As stipulated in the Helsinki Document, the new CSCE FSC started to function in Vienna on 22 September 1992, chaired by Austria. In his opening statement, Werner Fasslabend, Austria's Federal Minister of Defence, underlined changes in the security situation in Europe. "From now on, all participating States will be equal partners in negotiations on security and stability, and collective as well as individual security interests will be weighed equally", he solemnly emphasized.

The FSC of 1992 looked quite different from the FSC of today. At the time, there were only 52 participating States around the table, the Chairpersonship rotated weekly, and the only OSCE Partner for Co-operation was Japan.⁵ The Forum's setting itself was rather complicated and confusing. Fortunately putting an end to the organizational arrangements in "committees" set up in the Helsinki Document 1992,⁶ the Rome Ministerial Council in 1993 abolished the Consultative Committee and, at the 93rd plenary meeting, on 11 January 1995, it was decided that the Special Committee would simply be referred to as the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) proper.

The initial work and significant progress of the Forum reflect the spirit of pragmatism, hope and optimism, as well as the forward-looking momentum of the 1990s. As emphasized in the Paris Charter, the Euro-Atlantic region was entering into a new era aiming at democracy, peace and unity. "The era of confrontation and division of Europe has ended", and major confrontations appeared to belong to the past. All participating States seemed ready to fully embrace the CSCE's fundamental principles and commitments and to work together to achieving the goal of co-operative security in Europe. "I recall that we were all warmly welcomed to the opening plenary on 22 September 1992 by our first Chairperson, Austrian Ambassador Martin Vukovich. After the Austrian defence Minister Werner Fasslabend had delivered the opening statement, Ambassador Vukovich invited us to begin our work — which is precisely what we did", D. Phelan further remembers. In only two years, a whole array of fundamental documents comprising what is referred to as the "OSCE politico-military toolbox" was put together, such as:

- on 25 November 1993 in Vienna, a **Programme for military contacts and co-operation** including, *inter alia*, joint military exercises and training, provision of experts, seminars on cooperation, etc.; the **Principles governing conventional arms transfers**,⁷ with an emphasis

⁵ Right at the 20th plenary meeting of the Special Committee of the FSC, on 3 March 1993, Japan was invited to attend an FSC event, the first Defence Planning Seminar.

⁶ The FSC was originally organized in two bodies: 1) the Special Committee meeting either for negotiations on arms control, disarmament and confidence-and security-building, or for consideration of, goal-oriented dialogue on and, as appropriate, elaboration or negotiation of proposals for security enhancement and co-operation; and 2) the Consultative Committee in respect of the existing and future tasks of the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC), which had been established by the Supplementary Document of the 1990 Charter of Paris. On the working modalities of the Forum before the 1994 Budapest Summit, see Matthias Z. Karádi, "Das Forum für Sicherheitskooperation", in IFSH, OSZE-Jahrbuch 1996, Baden-Baden, 1996, pp. 379-391.

⁷ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/6/42313.pdf>

CSCE FORUM
FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION
VIENNA

JOURNAL No. 1

1st PLENARY MEETING OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

1. Date: Tuesday, 22 September 1992

Opened: 10.20 a.m.

Suspended: 1 p.m.

Resumed: 3.30 p.m.

Closed: 4.35 p.m.

2. Chairman: Mr. M. Vukovich (Austria)

3. Opening statement by Mr. W. Fasslabend, Federal Minister of Defence
(Austria)

4. Subjects discussed:

General statements

Procedural questions, including drawing of lots for the chairmanship

5. Statements:

Austria, Norway, United States of America, Poland, Cyprus, Sweden, United Kingdom, Hungary, France, Italy, Germany, Russian Federation, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Netherlands, Croatia, Denmark, Belgium

Chairman

6. Next meeting:

Wednesday, 30 September 1992, at 10 a.m., in the Plenary Hall

Chairman: Germany

on transparency and restraint as well as taking into account the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the recipient country and the internal and regional situation in and around; and a catalogue of **Stabilizing measures for localized crisis situations**⁸ designed to address internal disputes with the potential to lead to military tensions or conflicts.

- On 28 November 1994 in Budapest, the **Vienna Document (VD) 1994**,⁹ which expanded the provisions of the previous Vienna Documents; and the document on the **Global exchange of military information**,¹⁰ requesting participating States to annually exchange information on major weapon and equipment systems (MWES) and personnel in their conventional armed forces, as well as on the command structure of their forces, on their territory and worldwide.
- On 3 December 1994, also at the Budapest Summit which transformed the CSCE into the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the **Principles governing non-proliferation**¹¹ of weapons of mass destruction and missile technology; and the **Code of Conduct on politico-military aspects of security**,¹² one of the most important normative documents in the OSCE politico-military dimension and a landmark document for security sector governance and the democratic control of armed forces.¹³

“When the Forum for Security Co-operation was established, I think it is fair to say that an era of confrontation ended and new possibilities to foster politico-military security were arising. And the FSC established a new type of security interaction among participating States.”

Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid, Address to the “Millennium” plenary meeting of the FSC, 9 February 2022

⁸ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/b/42314.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/d/41270.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/7/41384.pdf>. The GEMI is separate from other information exchange regimes and is not subject to limitations, constraints or verification.

¹¹ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/d/16530.pdf>

¹² <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/7/41355.pdf>

¹³ Para. 15 of the Code of Conduct states that: “The participating States will implement in good faith each of their commitments in the field of arms control, disarmament and CSBMs as an important element of their indivisible security”.

Since 2011, the FSC hosts an annual discussion on the implementation of the Code of Conduct. The 12th edition will take place on 2 November 2022.

At the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Bratislava in December 2019, a Commemorative Declaration on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the OSCE Code of Conduct on politico-military aspects of security (MC.DOC/1/19) was adopted, the draft text of which originated in the FSC under the Forum’s Czech Chairpersonship.



Experts exchanging in the margins of the 2018 annual discussion on the implementation of the OSCE Code of Conduct on politico-military aspects of security, Vienna, 12-13 June 2018 (*Austrian Del. to the OSCE*)

By the end of 1994, the participating States realized that the Programme for Immediate Action was not fully adequate to cope with the new requirements of military security in the OSCE area. Accordingly, they considered that the FSC had to redefine a new agenda with fresh priorities. The Budapest Summit Declaration *Towards a Genuine Partnership in a New Era*, while welcoming the adoption by the FSC of the abovementioned “substantial measures”, directed the Forum to “continue its work in accordance with its mandate and to develop a framework which will serve as a basis for an agenda for establishing new measures of arms control, including, in particular, confidence- and security-building.” The participating States also mandated it to address specific regional security problems, with special emphasis on longer-term stability in South-Eastern Europe. The FSC was tasked to report on the above work by the 1996 Lisbon Summit and make recommendations.

This is why, in December 1996, during the first Swiss OSCE Chairpersonship, just before the Summit in the Portuguese capital city, the FSC adopted two decisions defining new directions for its further work, incorporated into the Lisbon Document as separate chapters:

- **The OSCE Framework for Arms Control¹⁴** was designed to contribute to the further development of the OSCE area as an indivisible common security space. It provided the OSCE’s approach conceptual and structural coherence by building and further developing a web of interlocking and mutually reinforcing arms control agreements, including the “three pillars” of the conventional arms control architecture: the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty), the Treaty on Open Skies and the Vienna Document. Furthermore, the FAC described challenges and risks in the area of politico-military security that can be dealt with through arms control measures. It enumerated a set of four guiding principles that remain valid today as a guide and good basis for future arms control efforts: sufficiency, transparency through information exchanges, verification, and limitations on forces. It acknowledged the need to ensure complementarity between OSCE-wide and sub-regional

¹⁴ FSC.DEC/8/96, 1 December 1996.

approaches. Finally, the Framework stipulated the need for a regular review of its impact on stability and security in the OSCE area as well as measures to improve operations or devise new instruments, if so required. In 2016, the OSCE Hamburg Ministerial Council commemorated the enduring value of that landmark document.¹⁵

“The FSC was and continues to be an important player in the process of change from rigid confrontation to comprehensive co-operation in European thinking about security.”

Walter Jürgen Schmid/Michael Klepsch, “On the Path to a European Security Architecture - The Contribution of the Forum for Security Co-operation”, *OSCE Yearbook* 1997¹⁶

- The **Decision No. 9/96 Development of the Agenda of the FSC**¹⁷ tasked the Forum to: strengthen existing arms control agreements and CSBM regimes, in particular the Vienna Document 1994, and use these tools in preventive diplomacy, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation; consider the possible provision of assistance requested by participating States with regard to implementation of agreed measures; support regional agreements and initiatives (also making effective use of its "Stabilizing measures for localized crisis situations"); establish and develop a web of interlocking and mutually reinforcing agreements pursuant to the Framework for Arms Control; develop its security dialogue function; and further develop Norm- and Standard-Setting Measures (NSSMs), such as the Code of Conduct on politico-military aspects of security, the Guidelines governing conventional arms transfers and the Principles governing non-proliferation, as well as the possibility of the adoption of new NSSMs.

At the end of the 20th century, the FSC's mandate was solidly defined, as well as its continued commitment to live up to, adapt and further develop the whole range of OSCE tools in the broader field of conventional arms control. In the **Charter for European Security** adopted at the Istanbul Summit in 1999, the Heads of State and Government of the OSCE participating States emphasized the FSC's ongoing valuable work, including the freshly adopted Vienna Document 1999, and their determination to make further efforts within the Forum in order to jointly address their common security concerns and to pursue the OSCE's concept of comprehensive and indivisible security so far as the politico-military dimension was concerned.¹⁸

¹⁵ From Lisbon to Hamburg: Declaration on the twentieth anniversary of the OSCE Framework for Arms Control, MC.DOC/4/16, 9 December 2016.

¹⁶ IFSH (ed.), Baden-Baden 1998, p. 305.

¹⁷ FSC.DEC/9/96, 1 December 1996.

¹⁸ See para. 30 and 34.

“It is the FSC which will play the role of a bridge today, carrying us from a more unpredictable and unstable security environment to an environment which is full of trust, confidence and security.”

Ambassador Hasan Göğüş, Head of the Turkish Foreign Ministry’s team tasked to prepare the Istanbul Summit in 1999, at the 20th anniversary of the summit held under Turkey’s FSC Chairpersonship, 29 January 2020

This brief overview shows that the FSC experienced its most dynamic phase in the first ten years after its establishment. To the extent that Matthias Karádi wondered whether the FSC could, at some point, challenge NATO and the North Atlantic Council.¹⁹ “I can still hear, resounding in my ears, the words of German Ambassador Rüdiger Hartmann: “Weiter, weiter, weiter!” — a motto that discouraged delegates from indulging in complacency after some major hurdles had been overcome.”, another privileged witness of that time recalled.²⁰ It should be highlighted, though, that this “golden age” of the newly created FSC could happen despite gloomy circumstances in the Balkans, with the war in Ex-Yugoslavia erupting in 1991-92, and in the ex-Soviet Union, with several armed conflicts breaking out after the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc. This is a lesson to be kept in mind: there is never “good weather” for the FSC and nothing like “business as usual”, neither in 1992 nor in 2022; but that should not prevent the Forum from moving forward through its agenda.

1.2 The FSC’s tenth anniversary “identity crisis”

The beginning of the 2000s witnessed a paradox.

On the one hand, the daily life of the FSC was flourishing, as evidenced for instance by Turkey’s perception of the state of affairs at the beginning of its Chairpersonship of the Forum in April 2002, as well as its detailed report of the FSC’s work three months after: projects and initiatives followed one another, and the Chair called on participating States to seek ways and means to increase the visibility of the FSC within the OSCE and beyond, and to consider developing a comprehensive policy of public relations and outreach.

On the other hand, there was a common understanding that the strategic context in which the Forum operated had changed since Helsinki (with, *inter alia*, the upcoming enlargement of NATO and the European Union, and the development of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy) and that the main goal of its establishment – strengthening the OSCE’s ability of preventing and eliminating armed conflicts between the participating States – had been achieved, without capitalizing on all the capabilities of the Forum. There was an obvious need to move to a second phase and to provide the FSC with a new impulse.

¹⁹ Matthias Z. Karádi, *op. cit.*, p. 387.

²⁰ Andrei I. Vorobiev, “Remembering the twists and turns on the FSC path”, *OSCE Magazine*, Oct.-Nov. 2007, p. 24.

This “mid-life crisis” was actually affecting the whole OSCE. “Let me stress that nowadays the OSCE is first and foremost affected by the crisis of values.”, Professor Adam Daniel Rotfeld, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, assessed in addressing a panel discussion entitled “30 years of the Helsinki Process. The contribution of the OSCE in a changing world”, on 20 July 2005. Six months earlier, the OSCE Ministerial Council in Sofia, “realizing that there is a need to improve the Organization’s functioning as well as its capabilities for collective action, without diminishing its strengths and flexibility”, decided to establish a Panel of Eminent Persons on strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE, in order to give new impetus to political dialogue and provide strategic vision for the Organization in the twenty-first century.²¹

“To a certain extent, the FSC shares the “crisis of meaning” of arms control in Europe as a whole: its motivation and objective were most closely linked to the situation during the Cold War.”

Thomas Kurz, “The Forum for Security Co-operation”, *OSCE Yearbook 2002*²²

In the course of a number of FSC plenary meetings in 2001, interesting and fruitful exchanges of views concerning the role and future agenda of the Forum occurred. At the 332nd meeting of the Forum, on 28 August 2001, one participating State underlined that “the major problem in making our Forum more effective is obviously not in the inadequacy of the mandate but in deficiencies in our working methods.” The lack of adequate follow-up procedures of the specific proposals by the participating States in the framework of the Security Dialogue, and the lack of substance and consistency of the discussions, were pointed out. The delegation suggested three ways out which, at the time, were gaining growing consensus:

- a better correlation between the agenda of the Forum and the developments of the politico-military situation in the OSCE area;
- the prolongation of the FSC Chairpersonship’s term; and
- a greater degree of coordination between the FSC and the PC, while avoiding introduction of a hierarchy between the two bodies.

The FSC’s new role in a changing security environment

The debate on the future role of the FSC was dominated by the need to strengthen the politico-military dimension of the OSCE in the changed security environment of its area. To achieve this goal, there was a need to adapt the Forum's agenda to meet new security challenges. On 12 September 2001, the Slovakian FSC Chairpersonship summarized the suggestions on the future role and agenda of the Forum. It was suggested, *inter alia*, to implement the Vienna Document and other CSBMs in crisis situations, and to involve the FSC

²¹ MC.DEC/16/04, 7 December 2004.

²² In: IFSH (ed.), Baden-Baden 2003, p. 365.

into emerging security challenges. That is why, at the Bucharest Ministerial Council, the FSC was charged to “address those aspects of new security challenges which fall within its mandate, and update its activities accordingly.”²³

The Helsinki Document 1992 authorized CSCE peacekeeping operations.²⁴ In 2001, one participating State suggested that the FSC co-ordinate activities of the participating States carrying out a peacekeeping operation under the OSCE mandate, including composition of forces and equipment to be used during the operation, command structure and proportion between military and civil components of the operation. The Forum would also elaborate a general concept of peacekeeping activities conducted under OSCE’s mandate, and examine the possibility of elaborating another concept for the creation of OSCE peacekeeping forces. However, such OSCE peacekeeping operations never materialized. And it is unlikely that the Permanent Council would have agreed to “delegate” this whole problematic to the FSC (*see hereafter*).

The extension of the term of the FSC Chair

At the beginning of the 2000s, there was a widespread belief that, in order to improve co-ordination between the decision-making bodies of the OSCE, as well as the organizational efficiency of the FSC, it would be beneficial to examine the role of the Chairpersonship of the Forum. The practice of rotating the Chair every month (since 1995), while ensuring participation of all 55 States,²⁵ did lead to a lack of continuity. While maintaining the current rotational chair, a number of delegations, including the European Union, were in favor of extending its duration to about four months, running from the beginning of an OSCE recess to another (Easter, summer and winter).

Following the initiative of the 2001 Romanian OSCE Chairpersonship to undertake the review of the OSCE’s structures, the Bucharest Ministerial Council “welcomed the Forum’s review of the modalities of its Chairmanship and its steps to enhance its organizational efficiency.”²⁶ In light of this mandate, the FSC decided to extend the duration of its rotating Chairpersonship from one month to four months corresponding to a full session between recesses.²⁷ This new arrangement came into effect on 1 February 2002.²⁸ In its perception of the state of affairs at

²³ Decision No. 3 *Fostering the Role of the OSCE as a Forum for Political Dialogue*, MC(9).DEC/3, para. 8 a).

²⁴ See Chapter III “Early warning, conflict prevention and crisis management (including fact-finding and rapporteur missions and CSCE peacekeeping)”, para. 17 and f. These provisions continue to be the main regulative framework for possible OSCE activities in the field of peacekeeping.

²⁵ In 1995. The OSCE – hence the FSC – now has 57 participating States.

²⁶ Decision No. 3 *Fostering the Role of the OSCE as a Forum for Political Dialogue*, MC(9).DEC/3, para. 10.

²⁷ FSC Decision No. 9/01 *Extension of the duration of the Chairmanship of the FSC*, FSC.DEC/9/01, 12 December 2001.

²⁸ Successive OSCE Secretaries General have suggested to further increase the length of the Chair’s rotation, for instance to six months (see SG Helga Maria Schmid’s address to the 1.000th plenary meeting of the FSC, on 09 February 2022, and SG Thomas Greminger’s address to the 939th plenary meeting of the FSC, “The 20th Anniversary of the OSCE Istanbul Summit”, on 29 January 2020).

the beginning of its Chairpersonship of the Forum in April of that year, the Turkish delegation assessed that, “though it creates considerable workload for the participating State concerned, the extended Chairmanship is bearing fruits in terms of ensuring continuity and proper follow-up of pending tasks.”

The co-operation between the Permanent Council and the FSC: Repositioning the Forum at the heart of the security discussion

Due to the cross-dimensional nature of many security challenges, the joint expertise of the PC and the FSC is often sought. Treating military security and confidence building measures separately from the key current developments of the day indeed makes no sense. However, the complementarity between the two OSCE decision-making bodies has never been a simple topic. Already at the Budapest Summit in 1994, it was decided that the CSCE FSC, “while retaining its autonomy and decision-making capacity, will be better integrated into CSCE political, conflict prevention and crisis management activities, thus allowing practical co-operation between the FSC and the Permanent Council in the consideration of current issues affecting military security.”²⁹ In Decision FSC.DEC/9/96 *Development of the Agenda of the Forum for Security Co-operation*, the participating States considered “ways of achieving greater cohesion between the FSC and the Permanent Council in complementary fields of activity.”

Although the valuable work of the FSC within its current mandate was deemed essential, since 1992 but even more after the September 2001 terrorist attacks in New York, much of the current security dialogue had been conducted in the PC: “Discussion of [security] issues has now in effect moved to the PC and attempts to revive the security dialogue in the FSC have not been successful. These issues are at the heart of what we should be doing in the OSCE and it is only right that the central body of the OSCE, which is the Permanent Council, should discuss them.”, one participating State observed in a non-paper on the FSC’s institutional reform in June 2001. The focus of the OSCE activity had moved to the PC. “We believe the FSC does much good work but it has become too detached from the main stream issues which the OSCE is focusing on.”, this delegation further assessed. Debates within the FSC were seen as taking place somehow in isolation, in *vacuum*, without any or sufficient linkage to the debates taking place at the PC. Therefore, the respective positioning of the two decision-making bodies started to be seen as ambiguous.

²⁹ Decision V, *Further Tasks of the CSCE Forum for Security Co-operation*, para. 7.

Already in 1996, the first Secretary General of the OSCE, Wilhelm Höynck, had sounded the alarm bell:

“How can the OSCE make its commitment to a comprehensive security system credible when there is an artificial division between the consultations on military aspects of security in the FSC and those on all other subjects under the OSCE aegis in the Permanent Council? Why does valuable time have to be lost when a conflict breaks out simply because the Permanent Council, as the “regular body for political consultation and decision-making”, has no authority to make decisions about the mechanisms to be used in the event of unusual military activities? There may be reasons for keeping the FSC as the leading body for negotiations in politico-military matters and arms control. But the “security dialogue” must be a part of the overall political consultations which take place regularly in the Permanent Council.”³⁰

Informal open-ended consultations were held in 2001 on the relationship PC/FSC. There seems to have been unanimity between participating States: the way for the FSC to regain its involvement in the key current security issues was to link itself more closely to the discussion of security issues in the PC. In that view, subordination of the FSC to the PC was openly suggested; in particular, one of the ideas put forward was that the PC should be able to task the FSC; and that the FSC should report to the PC. It is interesting to read the contribution of Ukraine to the discussion on the future role and agenda of the Forum, at the joint FSC/PC meeting on 17 September 2001: “Finally we would react to the proposal to subordinate the FSC to the PC. Probably in the future the topicality of this idea will become more obvious, but now it causes a number of questions. Does the PC have enough authority according to its status in order to task the FSC? What status will the documents have if they are elaborated within the committee which is going to substitute the FSC? What reaction shall we expect from our governments in case of decreasing the FSC status? Will all delegations have in their disposal experts for consideration of specific military issues? We believe nobody is in a position to answer these questions. Therefore, we prefer to put aside this particular proposal and concentrate our efforts on the coordination of activity of two equal OSCE’s bodies and thus we will manage to avoid the necessity of reconsidering the FSC mandate.”

Ministerial Decision No. 3 *Fostering the Role of the OSCE as a Forum for Political Dialogue* finally held a balanced position:

“While retaining its autonomy and decision-making capacity, [the FSC will] be more closely connected with the overall OSCE work on current security issues and, to this end, will make available its expert advice on issues of a politico-military nature, at the request of the Permanent Council; this may include, as

³⁰ Wilhelm Höynck, “The OSCE in Mid-1996: Stock-Taking and Prospects”, in: IFSH (ed.), *OSCE-Yearbook 1995/1996*, Baden-Baden 1997, p. 74.

*necessary, advice on politico-military issues of OSCE field operations, in accordance with their respective mandates. The Forum for Security Co-operation may also advise the Permanent Council or the Chairman-in-Office on its own initiative.”*³¹

such additional advisory role on current security issues, as a kind of “double-hatting” of the FSC, having been strongly advocated by the EU. However, another suggestion to link the Chairpersonship of the FSC to the Chairpersonship of the PC in order to improve coordination - The Chairpersonship-in-Office would have taken over the Chairpersonship of the FSC - was not taken up by the ministers in Bucharest; it was only decided that “the OSCE Chairmanship will be represented at the Forum’s Troika meetings. The Chairmanship of the Forum will also be represented at OSCE Troika meetings on matters of FSC concern.” The Turkish Chair of the FSC, in 2002, acknowledged with satisfaction the close cooperation between the two Troikas and the fruitful dialogue with the Portuguese Chairpersonship-in-Office, especially on the implementation of the OSCE Document on small arms and light weapons. The FSC’s profile was further raised in 2004, after a debate on the “visibility” of the Forum triggered by the Austrian Chair: the FSC started to increase its outreach to the outer world, in particular to other international *fora* sharing similar interests.

The creation of the Security Committee in 2006: the FSC’s survival at risk?

Transnational threats had always been into the FSC’s portfolio, although in a rather ambiguous way. Decision FSC.DEC/9/96 stated that “The participating States will consider: [...] measures for complementing (but not duplicating) the international community’s efforts in relation to [...] the fight against terrorism.” In September 2001, the Slovakian FSC Chairpersonship echoed suggestions to involve the Forum in the management of emerging security challenges, including the fight against internal and international terrorism, the impact of international organized crime on the security of the region, and policing as part of conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation. The Bucharest Plan of Action for combating terrorism, adopted by the Ministerial Council on 4 December 2001, mandated the FSC to contribute to the fight against terrorism within its area of competence. Furthermore, the Plan required the FSC to prepare a “road map” for implementation of relevant tasks, which was adopted on 20 March 2002³² and subsequently submitted to the Permanent Council. Both the Bucharest Plan of Action and the FSC road map put a particular emphasis on enhancing the implementation of the OSCE Document on small arms and light weapons and the Code of Conduct on politico-military aspects of security, due to their relevance to combating terrorism.

³¹ MC(9).DEC/3, para. 8 b).

³² FSC.DEC/5/02.

A former OSCE Secretary General remembers: Lamberto Zannier (2011-2017)



I keep a vivid memory of my address to the Forum on 10 October 2012, under the Chairpersonship of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, one year after my inception as Secretary General of the OSCE.

My intention was to share some considerations on the work in the politico-military dimension of the OSCE, also looking ahead of the larger debate on the future of arms control in the OSCE in the context of the Helsinki+40 discussions. From an institutional perspective, it was important to reassess the relationship between the PC and the FSC on the broader first dimension agenda. I also suggested to experiment direct engagement between the FSC and the Security Committee –either through their respective Chairs or through informal joint sessions either in plenary or at the level of working groups- to ensure better understanding on approaches to issues in different ways relevant to both fora ((i.e. UNSC Resolution 1540, border-related activities, issues related to the conflict cycle, and in particular early warning). This was particularly needed, in my view, since we witnessed an increasing number of cross-dimensional activities, well justified by a comprehensive approach to combating global security threats and challenges.

With regards to the growing demand for support by participating States to enhancing implementation of normative measures contained in relevant FSC documents and decisions, especially in the field of SALW and Conventional Ammunition, I encouraged the participating States to consider establishing a standard template for the assistance projects, and offered the Secretariat's support in this task.

Finally, I focused on the issue of partnerships, both with partners States and other international and regional organizations, something which was – and still is – dear to my heart. At this time, the League of Arab States, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and many others, were looking for inspiration from and interaction with the OSCE.

Less than two years after, the crisis in and around Ukraine would erupt and mobilize the energy of the Organization. However, despite clouds on the horizon, 2012 was still a time of relative hope and optimism in the Euro-Atlantic region.

Similarly, the FSC took its own part in the adoption of the Strategy to address threats to security and stability in the 21st century at the Maastricht Ministerial Council in 2003. In a series of meetings from 14 May till 9 July 2003, the Forum, under Germany's leadership, reviewed its relevant documents within the politico-military dimension in order to evaluate their continuing relevance with regard to traditional and non-traditional threats and to identify any positive role it could play by addressing unresolved questions related to these threats, in view to assist the overall work of the informal Group of Friends on the forthcoming Strategy. Initial discussions in the Forum pointed to the necessity to follow this issue in coordination with the PC.

The Maastricht document finally specified:

*"The OSCE area, however, also faces a number of threats in the politico-military dimension that are either new or have changed in nature or impact. This requires a double-track response in line with paragraph 28 of the Charter for European Security, notably that full implementation, timely adaptation and, when required, further development of arms control agreements and CSBMs are key contributions to our political and military stability. The effectiveness of existing documents will be improved and enhanced where needed, and additional or new tools will be developed where this proves necessary".*³³

It became clear, however, that the PC needed to be reinforced by subsidiary bodies in order to make it more inclusive, allow for more open exchanges and raise its profile as a forum for political dialogue and decision-making, in particular in the first, non-military dimension.

The debate over an OSCE structure made up of committees had already erupted at the beginning of the 2000s. The Permanent Council was to have three committees working under it among which the FSC was to become the committee for politico-military affairs; alongside this a committee for the human dimension as well as one for the economic and environmental dimension were to be established. It is quite striking to recall that the disappearance of the FSC was openly envisaged: "Some delegations questioned in principle the right of an independent FSC to exist as an autonomous decision-making body also in future."³⁴ Fortunately, this comprehensive approach to systemizing the structure of the OSCE had not been accepted.

³³ Para. 45.

³⁴ Thomas Kurz, *op. cit.*, p. 367.



Ms. Romina Kuko, Deputy Minister of Interior of Albania, addressing the joint FSC-PC meeting on 26 February 2020 (Micky Kroell/OSCE)

The discussion came back on the table in 2005, with the report of the group of Eminent Persons tasked by the 2004 Ministerial Council to strengthen the effectiveness of the OSCE. While recommending the introduction of a committee structure made up of three pillars corresponding to the traditional dimensions: a Security Committee, a Human Dimension Committee and an Economic and Environmental Committee, subordinate to the Permanent Council, the Eminent Persons made clear that:

“The Panel was divided on whether the actual tasks and functions of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) could be fulfilled by the new Security Committee. One view was that the FSC should be transformed into the new Security Committee. The other view was that the FSC should be maintained with its autonomous status, fulfilling its 1992 mandate with its agenda updated. The latter position would mean that the new Security Committee would not substitute for the FSC but would only fulfil the non-military aspects of the politico-military dimension, not covered by the FSC.”³⁵

Interrogation related to the FSC’s fate seems to have divided the OSCE community, the end of the Forum having been, once again, openly envisaged: “In case of introducing three committees, should the FSC be maintained and if so what would be its role?”, the Slovenian Chairpersonship-in-Office asked in 2005 in a food-for-thought paper on strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE. Finally, the FSC survived this dilemma and preserved its mandate and autonomy: the Security Committee was established at the Brussels Ministerial Council as a subordinated body of the PC and a platform for dialogue and consensus building on “non-

³⁵ “Common Purpose. Towards a More Effective OSCE”, Final Report and Recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE, 27 June 2005, para. 32 b), p. 21, accessible under <https://www.osce.org/cio/15805>.

military and political aspects of security, including implementation of the commitments of the participating States”.³⁶ This preserved the FSC capacity to address issues related to preventing and combating terrorism, such as diversion of small arms and light weapons into illegal trafficking and ensuring effective and comprehensive export controls on SALW.

1.3 The FSC’s third decade: The momentum is over

In 2012, the OSCE emerged from the “Corfu Process”, launched by the Greek 2009 Chairpersonship-in-Office as an informal, wide-ranging and open Vienna-based dialogue on the key issues of wider European security. At the summit convened by the Kazakh Chairpersonship-in-Office in December 2010, the participating States recommitted themselves “to the vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals.”³⁷ Yet, the 20th anniversary of the FSC undoubtedly corresponded to the end of an era. The importance of arms control diminished dramatically in the 21st century until the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014.

The erosion of the “web of interlocking and mutually reinforcing arms control agreements”

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the FSC started to be confronted with destructive processes over which it had no control.

The Helsinki Document of 1992 had provided for the harmonization and subsumption of the various obligations within the framework of disarmament and arms control under one FSC umbrella. However, this was never implemented and thus, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), the Open Skies Treaty as well as the Dayton Accords, had lived their own life outside of the Forum, with distinctive consultative and decision-making bodies in Vienna for the parties to each treaty. However, we saw that the OSCE Framework for Arms Control provided the OSCE with structural coherence by building and further developing a web of interlocking and mutually reinforcing arms control agreements, including these “pillars” of the conventional arms control architecture as well as the Vienna Document. Therefore, the weakening of one pillar could only have repercussions on the others.

On 12 December 2007, the Russian Federation suspended the application of the 1990 CFE Treaty, the “cornerstone of European security”, which in Moscow’s opinion had “divorced from reality”.³⁸ It took only a few years to experts to realize that the adapted CFE endorsed in the margins of the Istanbul Summit, the “bridge-builder to the 21st century”, would not come into force and that the future of European conventional arms control should not be

³⁶ Ministerial decision No. 17/06 *Improvement of the Consultative Process*, MC.DEC/17/06, 5 December 2006.

³⁷ Astana Commemorative Declaration *Towards a Security Community*, SUM.DOC/1/10/Corr.1*, 3 December 2010, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/6/74985.pdf>.

³⁸ See Zdzisław Lachowski, “The CFE Treaty one year after its suspension: a forlorn Treaty?”, *SIPRI Policy Brief*, Jan. 2009, p. 1.

made contingent upon this formality. The conflict in the Caucasus in 2008, the recognition of two breakaway regions and the stationing of forces by Russia without Georgia's consent further complicated attempts to revive conventional arms control and led to the failure of the informal talks "at 36" (July 2010 to May 2011)³⁹ and of the fourth CFE Review Conference in September 2011. On 11 March 2015, the Russian Federation further suspended its participation in the Joint Consultative Group, the body dealing with questions relating to compliance with the provisions of the CFE Treaty in Vienna. As for the other "pillar" of the European security architecture, the Open Skies Treaty, its very existence was not yet jeopardized in 2012 (which would happen a few years later, in 2020, when the United States withdrew from the treaty, Russia following suit the year after), but its "raison d'être" was already starting to be questioned.⁴⁰

"In short, the OSCE-based arms-control architecture is in crisis."⁴¹ This could only have an impact on the work of the FSC. In particular, a link was soon established between the deadlock of the CFE Treaty and the negotiations on the Vienna Document.⁴²

The outsourcing of arms control

The FSC could have offered a venue for exchanges on revitalization of arms control. In 2013, Ukraine suggested initiating a dialogue within the FSC aimed at discussing the role conventional arms control and CSBMs can play in contemporary and future European security architecture. "We are in favour of general and strategic discussions on conventional arms control in the framework of the FSC Security Dialogue", the EU similarly advocated on 22 May 2013. Unfortunately, over the past decade, structural arms control has been dealt with outside of the FSC, with only a general political relationship to the Forum's agenda.

In 2016, OSCE participating States adopted the Ministerial Declaration on the 20th anniversary of the OSCE Framework for Arms Control: From Lisbon to Hamburg. In this declaration, they committed themselves to work towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating conventional arms control and CSBMs in Europe.

³⁹ The so-called "Group of 36" discussions (comprising the 30 States parties to the CFE Treaty and the six NATO member States which were not parties to the Treaty) took place under the leadership of the U.S. Special Representative for conventional arms control, Ambassador Victoria Nuland, and her Russian counterparts, Ambassadors Anatoly Antonov and Mikhail Ulyanov. The negotiations were aimed at finding a way to revive the CFE regime, through a possible framework document addressing the differing security concerns of the interested States.

⁴⁰ See Loïc Simonet, "Open Skies: successes and uncertainties of an iconic post-Cold war instrument", *OSCE Magazine*, 2012, Issue 1, pp. 18-21.

⁴¹ Patricia Flor, "From Lisbon to Hamburg – Supporting a New Start in Conventional Arms Control in Europe", in: IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook* 2016, Baden-Baden 2017, p. 47.

⁴² See Pierre von Arx, "Recent Developments in the Field of Arms Control and Confidence- and Security-Building Measures", in: IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook* 2011, Baden-Baden 2012, p. 206.

A former OSCE Secretary General remembers: Thomas Greminger (2017-2020)



Aligning politico-military activities

My lasting impression from the Forum for Security Co-operation is that its work is too important to be left in a silo. The *raison d'être* of the OSCE is to promote security, which certainly includes “hard security”.

Arms control and confidence- and security-building measures were instrumental in reducing tensions and normalizing relations between Russia and the West in the 1990s, and they are badly needed today. Failure to make progress on core FSC issues will undermine all other aspects of the OSCE’s work. As underlined in so many OSCE commitments, security is indivisible. Unfortunately, fewer and fewer participating States have in recent years been ready to consider the OSCE as a central platform to discuss and negotiate arms control and confidence- and security-building measures in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area. While the FSC continued to do valuable work on certain topics like SALW and Conventional Ammunition, it became more and more politicized and marginalized, particularly after 2014. Attempts to reinvigorate OSCE’s role in military risk reduction and arms control through the Structured Dialogue created by the Hamburg Ministerial Council in December 2016 unfortunately failed. The idea that an informal platform like the Structured Dialogue could produce ideas that the FSC would pick up and transform into guidelines or norms did not materialize.

For the OSCE to remain relevant and for relations between Russia and the West to become more stable and cooperative, arms control, disarmament, and confidence- and security-building measures will have to be in the forefront of the Organization’s work. The place to do this will be in the FSC.

Pursuant to this document, on 20 February 2017, an open-ended informal working group of the OSCE was created to provide a forum for a Structured Dialogue on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area. The purpose of this process was not hidden: to offer participating States a useful space to engage on issues that can be difficult to address in formal OSCE *fora* like the FSC. In the case of the Structured Dialogue, thinking “out of the box” meant thinking outside the FSC. The Forum was *de facto* dispossessed from a debate which, in normal conditions, it should have hosted. Without judging the outcome and achievement of the Structured Dialogue, which has proven to be an effective venue for in-

depth exchanges as well as an incubator for ideas, this was a tacit acknowledgement of the FSC's limitations and inability to meet such requirement.

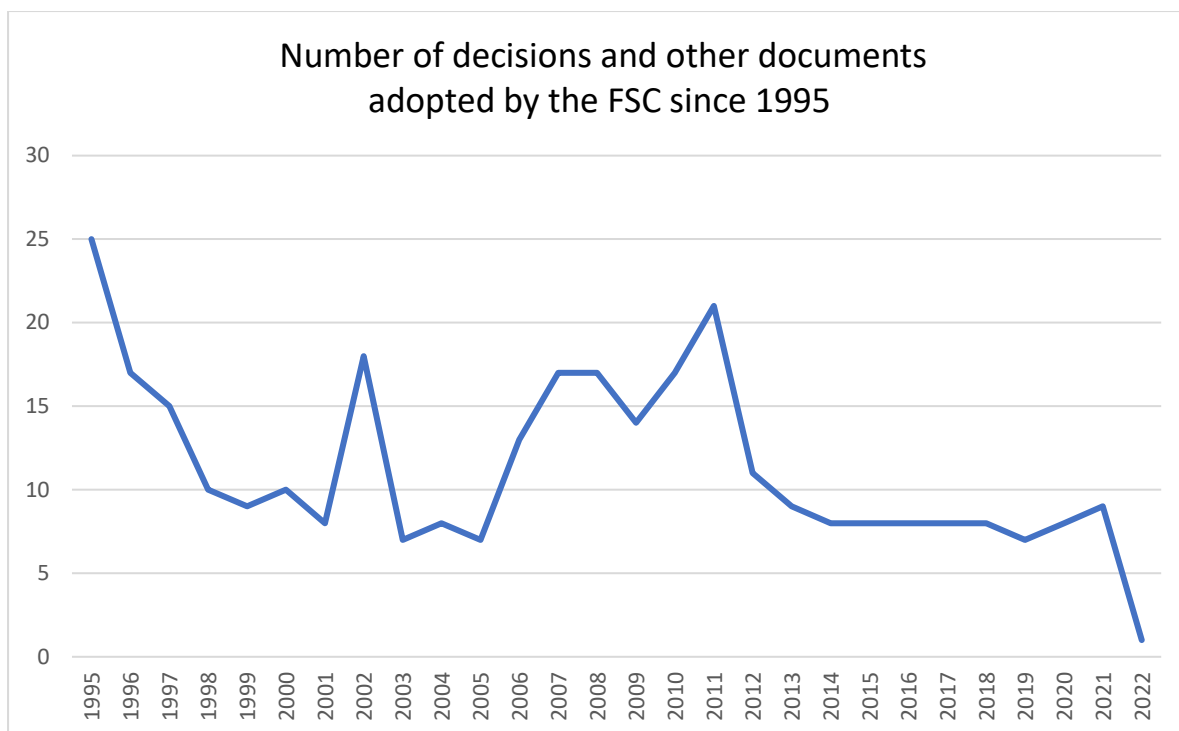
A “housekeeping” Forum?

In 2012, most of the traditional strategic elements in the field of arms control and disarmament had been regulated or the consensus for regulation had already been exploited, for instance in the field of small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition, where a considerable work had been achieved in the FSC's twenty years of existence. Remaining loopholes reflected strategic or national interests and inherent ambiguities that were difficult to overcome without fundamental reorientation. This was the case, for instance, for the necessary update of the Vienna Document, which after 2011 turned into the stalemate, despite efforts by the consecutive FSC Chairpersonships and numerous proposals put forward on various chapters of the Document, a few of these enjoying broad support. Coincidentally, in 2012, the Russian Federation suspended the implementation of the VD for half a year for internal “technical” reasons.

This “mission accomplished” effect, combined with a deteriorating atmosphere at the Forum and the radicalization of the positions, has inevitably led to a sharp drop in the number of decisions adopted in the *Neuer Saal*. It is of course the case for the Vienna Document: four “FSC Plus decisions” have been adopted in 2012-2013, but no substantial VD-related FSC decisions over the last nine years, compared to the 33 VD-related decisions on substantial issues endorsed between 1995 and 2011. This diminution also affects other fields of activities of the Forum.

For the first time, the 19th OSCE Ministerial Council in Dublin in 2012 failed to adopt any decision related to politico-military issues, whereas adopting at least a decision on the “Issues relevant to the FSC” and another one on SALW/SCA had been a tradition until then.⁴³ While subsequent Ministerial Councils sometimes managed to decide on pol-mil topics (the OSCE Principles governing non-proliferation in Kyiv 2013 and Bratislava 2019; the Code of Conduct in Basel 2014 and Bratislava; SALW/SCA in Kiyv, Basel, Hamburg 2016, Vienna 2017 and Milan 2018; the Framework for Arms Control in Hamburg; UNSCR 1540 in Bratislava), the item “Issues relevant to the FSC” definitely disappeared from the list of adopted decisions and declarations. Again, in 2020 and 2021, the ministers gathered in Tirana and Stockholm could not adopt any pol-mil decisions at all, nor make any joint statements, despite FSC chairs' tireless efforts to lift divergences on four draft decisions conveyed to the Swedish capital.

⁴³ See Ministerial Decision No. 7/11 *Issues relevant to the Forum for Security Co-operation*, adopted in Vilnius on 7 Dec. 2011 (MC.DEC/7/11/Corr.1).



Source: Index of decisions and other documents adopted by the FSC since 1995, published by the OSCE Conference Services, SEC.GAL/1/22, 7 January 2022. Only one decision has been adopted so far in 2022 (Updated Best Practice Guide on Ammunition Marking, Registration and Record-Keeping, FSC.DEC/1/22 16 February 2022).

Comments: The FSC productivity peak following its inception is clearly perceptible (25 in 1995, 17 in 1996). In 2002, another peak (18) corresponds to, *inter alia*, the adoption of 4 decisions related to the Communications Network, practicalities regarding the implementation of the OSCE Document on SALW, adopted two years earlier, and 3 documents on combating terrorism. In 2010 (17) and 2011 (21), the implementation of the Code of Conduct and the re-issuance of the Vienna Document generate extra activity; in 2011, the FSC manages to forward 3 draft decisions to the Ministerial Council in Vilnius, which is the last to adopt a ministerial decision on “Issues relevant to the FSC”. After 2014, no more decision on substance can be adopted, and the Forum focuses on events’ dates, agendas and modalities; 2021 being an exception, with 4 Best Practices Guides updated by the FSC. In 2022, the FSC decision-making capacity collapses.

The situation seems to be clear: given the currently tense climate in the OSCE region, the FSC cannot realistically expect immense leaps forward anymore. The only thing participating States can expect is to work more efficiently and effectively with the tools they have at hand, improve implementation compliance and make better use of the CSBM-potential of the existing OSCE-toolbox.

“Most people think that we are happy to be finished. Yes, we are happy to get out but we are also disappointed that it is basically still not a mechanism that serves well the growing agenda of this organization. It used to be devoted to the negotiation of major documents and now it is also at the same time essentially a housekeeping operation.”

Ambassador Jivan Tabibian, Permanent Representative of Armenia, at the closure of his Chairpersonship of the FSC, on 21 July 2004

2-The FSC's life: Dialogue, Transparency and Confidence-building

2.1 The FSC's Chairpersonship

The Chairpersonship of the FSC rotates three times a year, for the period from the end of each recess (winter, spring, summer) to the end of the following recess. Participating States succeed each other in the French alphabetical order (for 2022: Azerbaijan, Belarus and Belgium). The Chair takes the lead in setting the agenda for each meeting of the Forum, brings attention to issues concerning the implementation of adopted commitments, and is responsible for co-ordination of and consultation on current FSC business.



Ms. Milica Pejanović-Durisić, Minister of Defence of Montenegro, at the opening of the Montenegrin Chairpersonship of the FSC on 20 April 2016 (*Micky Kroell/OSCE*)

Exercising the Chairpersonship of the FSC might contribute raising the country's profile in multilateral diplomacy. At the closing session of the plenary meeting of the Forum on 24 July 2019, Mr. Muzaffar Huseinzoda, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, emphasized that the Chairpersonship of the FSC during the second trimester had been a significant milestone and productive experience in Tajikistan's foreign policy.

*"I should like to conclude my remarks by referring to the positive experiences that this Chairmanship has brought to me and my team. (...) With these words allow me to hand over the symbols of the FSC Chairmanship to Lithuania as the incoming country – the whip for military discipline, the lifebelt for mutual support, and finally the yurt for the spirit of co-operation under our common roof."*⁴⁴

H. S. H. Ambassador Maria-Pia Kothbauer, Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein, closing her Chairpersonship of the FSC on 20 March 2013

In performing its duties, the FSC Chair is assisted by the preceding and succeeding Chairs, operating together as a so-called "FSC Troika". The Troika ensures continuity in the Forum's work, drawing up a balanced work programme covering both established and new issues, all with a view to making the FSC's work even more effective.



Ms. Aurelia Frick, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Justice and Culture of Liechtenstein and H.S.H. Ambassador Maria-Pia Kothbauer, Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the OSCE, at the 911th FSC plenary meeting on 27 March 2019 (Micky Kroell/OSCE)



Mr. Lukáš Parížek, State Secretary for Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia, talking with Ambassador Radomír Boháč (+), Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the OSCE, at the opening of the Slovakian FSC Chairpersonship on 17 Jan. 2018 (Micky Kroell/OSCE)

In order to facilitate interaction between the PC and the FSC, the OSCE Chair is represented at the FSC Troika meetings, and the FSC Chair can be invited to OSCE Troika meetings when matters of FSC concern are on the agenda. In addition to encouraging a cross-dimensional approach to security challenges and avoiding overlaps, PC–FSC co-operation is particularly relevant to those cross-dimensional issues/activities with politico-military aspects which concern both bodies, for instance the organization of the Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC), the OSCE's main event for enhancing dialogue on regional security challenges.

⁴⁴ A fourth FSC insignia was added in 2020 when Ukraine presented a mace, or "Bulava" in Ukrainian, which served as a weapon in the Middle Ages.

The PC and the FSC regularly (normally 2-3 times a year) convene joint meetings to consider issues related to the competence of both bodies⁴⁵ and synchronize ideas and/or actions. Extraordinary joint FSC-PC meetings have also been dedicated to crisis and consideration of the OSCE's possible contributions, for instance on the situation in Ukraine in 2014, based on the Risk Reduction mechanism outlined in Chapter III of the Vienna Document (*see hereafter*). Although introducing joint FSC-PC decisions has been suggested on issues with overlapping or complementary mandates, including the preparation of documents for submission to the Ministerial Council, such procedure has never been implemented in practice. However, as consistently suggested by OSCE Secretaries General, participating States could consider enhancing their efforts through joint FSC-PC decision-making on such overlapping issues.⁴⁶



Captain Anna Björsson, Gender Advisor and Project Coordinator for the Gender Coach Program, Swedish Armed Forces Headquarters, briefing a joint FSC-PC meeting on 7 Oct. 2015 (*Micky Kroell/OSCE*)

The FSC Chair receives valuable advice and practical support from the relevant executive structures of the OSCE, in particular the FSC Support Unit of the Conflict Prevention Centre of the OSCE's Secretariat. The FSC Support Unit also assists OSCE participating States in implementing their commitments in the politico-military dimension through capacity-building, awareness-raising and technical assistance. As an example, to respond to the necessity of providing a systematic transfer of knowledge on FSC topics to the States in the most cost- and time- efficient way, the Unit has developed an FSC E-Learning Programme which encompasses the whole range of FSC activities, in accordance with the needs and requirements of all involved stakeholders.

The FSC Coordinators, as well as the Chairperson of the Informal Group of Friends (IGoF) of SALW and SCA, also offer an indispensable source of support and information to FSC Chairs

⁴⁵ Such as: Transition aspects in Afghanistan (51st joint FSC-PC meeting on 9 May 2012); Efforts in the Field of Disarmament (57th, 21 May 2014); European- Eurasian security (62nd, 09 March 2016); Revisiting the 1996 OSCE Framework for Arms Control (63rd, 19 October 2016); Hybrid Threats and Modern Warfare (78th, 15 July 2020).

⁴⁶ See SG Helga Maria Schmid's address to the 1.000th meeting of the FSC, on 09 February 2022, and SG Thomas Greminger's address to the 939th plenary meeting of the FSC, "The 20th Anniversary of the OSCE Istanbul Summit", on 29 January 2020.

and Troikas, and form an important backbone for their everyday work.⁴⁷ Coming from national delegations, they are asked to fulfil this role on a voluntary basis. They provide invaluable corporate knowledge and a collective memory of good practices, deliver assistance to relieve some of the burden of the FSC Chair, and display a high level of ownership and dedication to the objectives of the FSC. In particular, the Chairperson of the IGoF has been instrumental in the recent updating process of the OSCE Best Practice Guides on SALW and SCA (*see hereafter*).

Several avenues for enhancing the role of the FSC Chairpersonship and increasing the Forum's impact and effectiveness have been suggested, such as measures to strengthen the FSC Chair's opportunities to oversee and encourage implementation of agreed commitments by participating States or, as already mentioned, the extension of the duration of the FSC Chairpersonship to six months.

2.2 The FSC's working modalities

Similarly to the Permanent Council, the FSC's activities are subject to the OSCE Rules of Procedure adopted in 2006. Although the Forum should be understood as a whole, each of the three main components of its Wednesday meetings serves a specific purpose.

- High-quality and multifaceted **Security Dialogues** allow regular exchanges on politico-military issues with the aim of keeping certain topics on the agenda of the FSC, such as the Vienna Document and other CSBMs, small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SALW/SCA), UNSC Resolution 1325, the Code of Conduct on politico-military aspects of security, and UNSC Resolution 1540. Security Dialogues also allow the FSC Chairs to introduce new topics they consider appropriate and relevant for discussion in the FSC. The participation of experts and distinguished guest speakers from the capitals, international organizations and academic institutions greatly enrich the FSC's work. The FSC holds approximately 21 Security Dialogues per year. In 2020-2021, 50% were devoted to arms control (VD, CSBMs, transparency, threats, new technologies and regional security).

"It is easy to overlook the Security Dialogue, not originally an FSC charter component, but now such a dominant component of the landscape, it's simply taken for granted. But try to imagine an FSC grappling with a daunting range of contemporary political-military issues and challenges without such a mechanism to draw out candid discussion and incorporate broad expert perspective and judgment week by week."

Ambassador Dr. Michael Carpenter, Permanent Representative of the United States, statement at the "Millennium" plenary meeting of the FSC, 9 February 2022

⁴⁷ Right on 2 June 1993, at the 31st plenary meeting of the Special Committee of the FSC, the Chairperson started to nominate "co-ordinators for various items of the Programme for Immediate Action".



Col. B. Kassymova, Associate Professor of Military and State Governance, National Defense University, Kazakhstan, addressing the 832nd FSC plenary meeting on 12 Oct. 2016 (*Micky Kroell/OSCE*)



Colonel Dr. Ortner, Director of the Museum and Institute of Military History, Vienna, at the special FSC meeting of the Slovenian FSC Chairpersonship on 30 May 2018 on the topic: "Centenary of the end of the World War I – Message for the current security context" (*Austrian Del. to the OSCE*)

- Discussions under the **General Statements** agenda item should aim to create trust through transparency and provide a platform for dialogue. They allow participating States to raise issues of concern, inform about developments on matters of politico-military importance and are used to increase transparency, for example through voluntary briefings on military exercises under the Vienna Document.
- **Working Groups A and B**, the informal subsidiary bodies of the FSC, focus on the full implementation (WG A) and further development (WG B)⁴⁸ of the whole spectrum of the OSCE politico-military toolbox related to CSBMs, SALW/SCA and the Code of Conduct.⁴⁹ The core function of the Working Groups is the exchange of positions with the aim of finding consensus on current implementation issues, and the updating and modernizing of the OSCE politico-military toolbox. Another informal subsidiary body of the FSC - the OSCE Communications Group – normally meets three times per year.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ The sharing of burden between WG A and WG B is sometimes rather ambiguous, and might generate "grey zones", as it is not always easy to explain whether a given topic serves to improve the existing *acquis* or is an independent, new measure (see Jan Kantorczyk/Walter Schweizer, "The OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) – Stocktaking and Outlook", in: IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook* 2008, Baden-Baden 2009, p. 285).

⁴⁹ See Decision 1/00 *FSC Working Groups* (FSC.DEC/1/00, 26 January 2000).

⁵⁰ The OSCE Communications Network is a computer-based system which provides direct communication links between participating States' capitals for the transmission of messages relating to, *inter alia*, provisions contained in the Vienna Document, the CFE Treaty and the Open Skies Treaty. The FSC has responsibility over the management of the Network (see OSCE Communications Network Document, annexed to FSC.DEC/5/99, 6 October 1999).

“We see the FSC as a team with 57 players”

Ambassador Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal, Secretary General for Foreign Affairs, at the opening session of the FSC under the Austrian Chairpersonship, 8 September 2021

Beyond the FSC’s weekly “routine”, the life of the Forum is punctuated by a few annual events which allow for exchanging views, ideas and proposals, brainstorming opportunities and interacting with the capitals’ teams.

- The **Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting (AIAM)** remains one of the major events in the OSCE calendar and one of the most important ones in the work of the FSC.⁵¹ Held in February or March, under the first Chairpersonship of the Forum, it enables participating States to take stock of progress made; exchange views on how to increase the efficiency of the instruments at their disposal; assess the overall implementation of OSCE commitments in the field of confidence- and security-building measures, primarily the Vienna Document; highlight existing implementation bottlenecks; and chart the way forward. It provides a lively opportunity for a comprehensive assessment of the work of the FSC and the implementation of the arrangements agreed in its framework. Beyond its original mandate in Section XI of the Vienna Document, the AIAM expanded subsequently to include the program review of all documents and measures adopted by the FSC. Thus, the AIAM is a truly unique platform bringing representatives from the Vienna-based delegations, the OSCE participating States’ capitals, and arms control agencies together.



Malta chairing the opening of the 30th Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting (AIAM), Vienna, 3-4 March 2020 (Micky Kroell/OSCE)

⁵¹ The first AIAM organized by the Special Committee of the FSC took place on 12-14 April 1994 in Vienna.

In 2020, the 30th AIAM allowed for the presentation of the OSCE Information Management and Reporting System (iMARS) developed by the CPC, which has become even more relevant in the unexpected context of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵² The 32nd AIAM took place on 1 March 2022, on the 6th day of the Russian operation against Ukraine, despite numerous requests to postpone the event.

- Paragraph 15.7 of the Vienna Document encourages the participating States “to hold periodic **high-level military doctrine seminars**”, also in relationship with paragraphs 30.1 and 30.1.2 on improving mutual relations and promoting contacts between relevant military institutions. Such periodic seminars foster military transparency, mutual confidence, and better understanding of doctrinal changes and their impact on defence structures in the light of the current European security situation. Around 350 senior-level military officials and experts from the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation attended the last HLMDS, on 9 and 10 February 2021. Moreover, Austria initiated holding of intersessional HLMDS, in 2017 and 2019, in order to follow on discussions in an informal setting and to look for further topics to be discussed at the next official HLMDS.



General Robert Brieger, Chief of Defence Staff of the Austrian Armed Forces at the opening session of the OSCE High-Level Military Doctrine Seminar, 9 February 2021 (*Micky Kroell/OSCE*)

⁵² In addition to enhancing the CPC's reporting capability, iMARS is being designed to support the participating States in using the officially exchanged military information and to provide deeper insights into that information through user- friendly visual presentation (including geographical maps, charts and graphs based on national submissions).

- The annual **Heads of Verification Centres meeting (HoV)** also feeds into the work of the FSC, by discussing problems related to the implementation of the Vienna Document and suggesting technical solutions to improve it.

Finally, the FSC has also enhanced its outreach to other OSCE structures, and actively contributes to regular high-level OSCE meetings, such as the Ministerial Council and the ASRC.

- Decision FSC.DEC/9/96 *Development of the Agenda of the Forum for Security Co-operation* ended up with the following provision: “The participating States of the OSCE have further decided that the FSC will report at the next meeting of the **Ministerial Council** on progress made and on which specific items the FSC has decided to take forward within the agenda.” This has become a systematic practice. The FSC also used to prepare and convey a “draft FSC paragraph for inclusion into the OSCE Ministerial Council declaration”, although the Porto Ministerial Declaration in 2002 was the last one the participating States managed to adopt.
- Although the **Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC)** is a whole-of-OSCE event, the Porto Ministerial Council Decision of 7 December 2002⁵³ stipulated the contribution of the FSC to this meeting. As already underlined, this task benefits from a high degree of coordination and cooperation between the FSC and the PC. For that purpose, the FSC Chairpersonship is assisted by a Coordinator to deal with the preparation of the ASRC and the follow-up of the proposals and suggestions made at the Conference.



Informal exchanges at the 30th AIAM in 2020 (Micky Kroell/OSCE)

⁵³ Ministerial Decision No. 3 *Annual Security Review Conference* (MC(10).DEC/3).

2.3 The main topics on the FSC's agenda

Due to its limited scope, this paper will just provide with a “snapshot” of the Forum’s main accomplishments on three flagship items of its portfolio: the Vienna Document, small arms and light weapons (SALW) and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA), and the “Women, Peace and Security” agenda. It would have been worth also focusing on the FSC’s work on the Code of Conduct, on non-proliferation matters and contribution to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004),⁵⁴ on emerging technologies⁵⁵, on Security Sector Reform/Governance (SSR/G), on mine action,⁵⁶ or even on the Forum’s mandate on Article IV of the Dayton Peace Accords. However, since it is not the purpose of this study to offer a detailed catalogue of the FSC’s activities, practitioners might better, for a comprehensive picture of the Forum’s work, refer to FSC Chairpersons’ reports at the Annual Security Review Conference or to the Ministerial Council.

The Vienna Document

The Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, as amended in 2011, is a key instrument for the confidence-building measures created by the OSCE and an essential part of the OSCE’s security architecture in the politico-military sphere. Based on the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, it defines the parameters of a regime of measures for greater transparency and confidence-building and allows for the exchange of military information⁵⁷ and for concrete verification measures within its area of application.

Since the adoption of its original version in 1990 after the end of the Cold War, the VD has been implemented for more than 30 years.⁵⁸ It is a reference point for the Security Dialogues

⁵⁴ See the Commemorative Declaration on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the OSCE Principles governing non-proliferation and fifteenth anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, adopted at the 2019 Ministerial Council in Bratislava (MC.DOC/2/19/Corr.1). In 2021, the OSCE contributed to the 2020–2021 Comprehensive Review on the status of implementation of UNSC Res. 1540.

⁵⁵ The German Chairpersonship of the Forum held a FSC Security Dialogue on arms-control responses to “Emerging Technologies” on 23 September 2020. Another Security Dialogue on “Challenges of the new generation warfare” was held on 12 May 2021, with the objective to raise awareness among the participating States about the challenges of rapid technological advances in the field of conventional weapons.

⁵⁶ In 2018, the role of mine action in all phases of conflict cycle was addressed under the Slovenian FSC Chairpersonship. In 2019, humanitarian demining issues were thoroughly addressed by the Swiss FSC Chair. On 22 January 2020, the Turkish Chairpersonship of the Forum organized a Security Dialogue on “Mine Action as a Confidence and Security Building Measure”. Finally, the 999th Meeting of the FSC, on 2 February 2022, was the setting of a discussion on this topic, in particular relation to the UN Security Council Resolution 2365.

⁵⁷ The Annual exchange of military information (AEMI) is an integral part of the VD (Chap. I). It provides for information exchange, in an agreed format, on military organization, manpower and major weapon and equipment systems in the zone of application for CSBMs. The aim of AEMI is to characterize military posture. Besides, it provides a valuable basis for verification planning. Hence it gives information on command organization of military forces specifying designation and subordination of all formations and units.

⁵⁸ The Vienna Document adopted on 17 November 1990, heir of the 1986 Stockholm Document on CSBMs and Disarmament in Europe, has been updated three times: on 4 March 1992 (VD 1992); on 28 November 1994 (VD 1994); and on 16 November 1999, at the 269th plenary meeting of the FSC in Istanbul. The VD 99 has long remained the reference, before its “cosmetic” update in 2011.

within the FSC. The Forum not only serves as the venue to discuss issues relating to these Confidence and Security Building Measures as stated in this document and to review them as appropriate, but it is also the primary platform for endeavors in the modernization of the VD. Indeed, the preservation and improvement of this instrument require a continuous process of adaptation and modernization to keep pace with the current developments in the politico-military sphere. Specifically, it is now necessary to take developments in the military and technological spheres into account, also in the way that armed forces conduct exercises; to enhance the crisis reaction capabilities and to further military contacts; to increase transparency regarding military forces and their activities; to improve both the inspection and evaluation of military units and the underlying politico-military agreements.

Therefore, updating the VD has been the Forum's primary contribution to confidence-building and military transparency over the years. Based on the mandate given by the Astana Summit,⁵⁹ a new procedure, the VD-PLUS mechanism, has been established by the FSC on 19 May 2010 for the regular updating of the VD every five years.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, such an indispensable update of the Document has not been undertaken since 2011, even though a number of modernization proposals have been presented in the competent FSC body, Working Group A.⁶¹ Valuable ideas have been gathered over years, some ending up in a joint proposal co-sponsored by the vast majority of participating States, but a substantive and balanced modernisation package remains to be agreed. FSC special sessions on re-issuing the Vienna Document in November 2016 and October 2021 ended up without consensus.

The Vienna Document continues to be an essential pillar of trust and co-operation among the 57 participating States. Against a backdrop of growing tension, CSBMs remain vital to ensuring predictability and co-operative security in the OSCE area. As hammered by 46 participating States in a joint statement on the VD delivered at the Stockholm Ministerial Council on 3 December 2021, it is therefore most fitting that the FSC continues to focus on discussions on updating and revitalizing the OSCE's politico-military toolbox, notably by revisiting a number of issues related to implementation of the VD and carrying on the discussion of its update. Reinvigorating such dialogue has been identified as an important task in the process of reducing tensions and mitigating the risk of military escalation.

⁵⁹ "Conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building regimes remain major instruments for ensuring military stability, predictability and transparency, and should be revitalized, updated and modernized. We value the work of the Forum for Security Co-operation, and look forward to the updating of the Vienna Document 1999." (Astana Commemorative Declaration Towards a Security Community, SUM.DOC/1/10/Corr.1*, 3 December 2010, para. 8).

⁶⁰ Decision No. 1/10 *Establishing a procedure for incorporating relevant FSC decisions into the Vienna Document* (FSC.DEC/1/10, 19 May 2010).

⁶¹ In 2020 the FSC Chair's Coordinator on the VD, who supports the FSC Chairpersonship, published a compendium comprised of the Vienna Document 2011, complemented with VD Plus Decisions, and all proposals of the participating States.

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition (SCA)

“Soft security tools” such as SALW destruction or management of stockpiled ammunition do significantly enhance the overall impact on conflict prevention as well as conflict resolution.

For such reason, recognizing the changing nature of conflicts and acknowledging that the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled spread of SALW pose “a threat and a challenge to peace and security, in particular as an element in terrorist activity and armed conflicts”, the Heads of State and Government at the Istanbul Summit (1999) decided to include the topic of SALW into the OSCE’s agenda. Right after the Summit, FSC Decision 6/99 (16 November 1999) decided “that the FSC includes the problem of the spread of small arms and light weapons as an item of priority on its agenda after the Istanbul Summit and launches a broad and comprehensive discussion on all its aspects”. SALW and SCA have been on the agenda of the Forum for more than twenty years. And the OSCE has set itself as a leading institution in this field.⁶²

In November 2000, the FSC adopted the OSCE Document on small arms and light weapons.⁶³ This politically binding instrument is the leading tool in the OSCE’s response to the illicit trafficking, excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms, which have been of great concern to the international community and closely relate to high levels of violence and crime. It sets out common criteria relating to exports and excess stocks, creates regional transparency for small arms transfers, and establishes the basis for a comprehensive exchange of information. The Document on SALW has proved to be an effective tool in addressing the problems arising from this category and in fostering transparency as well as confidence among the participating States. It has also become an important framework for dealing with surpluses and stockpiles of SALW with a view to reducing the risk of destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled proliferation of them, thereby also fostering co-operation among participating States.

The OSCE Document on SALW opened the way to consider specific small arms issues raised by participating States. This has allowed for an FSC swift and pragmatic approach on Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS), a threat that the 2003 Maastricht Strategy had pointed out.⁶⁴

⁶² See Hans J. Gießmann, “Small Arms: A Field of Action for the OSCE”, in: FSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2000*, Baden-Baden 2001, pp. 345-357.

⁶³ The Document was reissued in 2012 (FSC.DOC/1/00/Rev.1, 20 June 2012, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/0/20783_0.pdf).

⁶⁴ See FSC Decisions No. 7/03 *Man-Portable Air Defence Systems* (FSC.DEC/7/03, 23 July 2003), No. 3/04 *OSCE Principles for Export Controls of MANPADS* (FSC.DEC/3/04, 26 May 2004) and No. 5/08 *Updating the OSCE Principles for Export Controls of Man-Portable Defence Systems* (FSC.DEC/5/08, 26 May 2008).

A former OSCE Secretary General remembers: Marc Perrin de Brichambaut (2005-2011)

Among many memories of my close interaction with the FSC and its chairpersonships, I keep a very specific recollection of the Ukraine “Mélange” project which I actively promoted to the participating States.

The “mélange” is a highly complex and toxic chemical substance commonly used in conjunction with liquid-fuelled anti-aircraft and tactical missile rocket motors. With 16,200 tons of mélange left on its territory after the end of the Cold War, Ukraine requested the OSCE assistance in eliminating its stocks, in a safe and environmentally friendly manner, at a special meeting of the FSC on 29 September 2004, in accordance with the OSCE Document on SCA. The implementation of the three phases of the project lasted almost ten years, until the complete removal of this threat from Ukraine in March 2014. The most dangerous storage tanks were even removed prior to the UEFA Euro Cup 2012 games, co-hosted by Poland and Ukraine! At the time, it was the largest extra-budgetary project ever implemented by the OSCE.

The task of the OSCE Secretariat was unprecedented. My team was involved into the careful selection of the Contractor (two large chemical enterprises of the Russian Federation). The Secretary General (or his Director of Management and Finances) had to chair the Mélange Task Force (MTF), the main coordination and decision-making structure composed of both programmatic and administrative components (my Office, the CPC, Legal Services and DMF). A Project Management and Implementation Team (PMiT), including the CPC FSC Support Section, was responsible to ensure proper execution of respective role and responsibilities of the key stakeholders: the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence, the Contractor, the FSC, the Donors, and the OSCE Secretariat. My main concern was the potential responsibility of the OSCE in case of an accident during the loading of the mélange in the railroad cisterns and its transportation out of Ukraine to the Russian Federation to be eliminated, which fortunately never happened. I also had to liaise with the donors, on behalf of the Organization, to ensure the constant funding of the project, including through a U.S. contribution obtained thanks to the intervention of Senator Richard Lugar.

Although the completion of this milestone project came after the end of my second term as Secretary General (2011), I was happy to see the very positive feedback it received from local authorities and the civil society in Ukraine. The experience and capacities built by the OSCE were significant, and later allowed for the smooth implementation of similar projects in other participating States.



The “Mélange” project in Ukraine: Attaching pipeline to railway tank cars (CPC/FSC)

Following the tasking given in 2017 by the ministers in Vienna to “consider commencing biennial meetings to assess the implementation of the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA”,⁶⁵ the FSC started holding such Biennial Meetings the year after; the second Biennial Meeting on the implementation of the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA was held in Vienna on 13 and 14 October 2020.

Drawing on the information exchanged between the participating States, the FSC decided, in 2002, to start developing Best Practice Guides on certain aspects related to the control of SALW.⁶⁶ A first set of eight BPGs was compiled in the Handbook of Best Practices on SALW,⁶⁷ issued in 2003 and presented at the Maastricht Ministerial. Two additional Guides were added in 2008 and 2014. The Handbook provides with a set of recommendations of “best practices” relating to the full-cycle management of SALW from manufacture to secure storage, to deactivation and disposal, and encourages higher common standards of practice. It also takes other existing international initiatives and the experience of other international organizations relating to small arms into account. The Handbook is available in the six OSCE working languages as well as in Arabic.

It was with the same goal in mind that the FSC adopted a Document on stockpiles of conventional ammunition in November 2003,⁶⁸ endorsed one month after at the Maastricht

⁶⁵ Ministerial Decision No. 10/17 *Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition*, MC.DEC/10/17, 8 December 2017.

⁶⁶ Decision No. 11/02 *Preparation of Best Practice Guides on Small Arms and Light Weapons* (FSC.DEC/11/02, 10 July 2002)

⁶⁷ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/a/13616.pdf>

⁶⁸ FSC.DOC/1/03/Rev.1 - <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/9/15792.pdf>.

Ministerial, and published a Handbook of Best Practices on Conventional Ammunition in 2008.⁶⁹ The presence of SCA, explosive material and detonating devices in surplus and/or awaiting destruction, as well as their excessive and destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled spread, indeed continue to pose security and safety risks in the OSCE region.

In response to “the need for the OSCE to continue to enhance its SALW- and SCA-related norms and best practices”, as outlined in the Ministerial Council Declaration on *OSCE Efforts in the Field of Norms and Best Practices on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition*,⁷⁰ the process of updating existing guides began in 2019. This process is being led by the Chairperson of the Informal Group of Friends of SALW and SCA, with co-ordination and technical support being provided by the FSC Support Section within the CPC. The participating States have undertaken this comprehensive review in order to capture relevant developments at all stages of the life-cycle management of SALW – from manufacture, through stockpile management (including accounting, storage, transportation and security), to destruction, deactivation or legal transfers, while also providing an opportunity for their harmonization with other international standards and guidelines. Between 2020 and 2022, a number of updated BPGs has been adopted by the FSC.⁷¹

Responding to the request of the ministers gathered in Athens in 2009, and taking into consideration suggestions made at a successful OSCE meeting to review the OSCE Document on SALW held on 22 and 23 September 2009 in Vienna, the FSC also adopted a Plan of Action on SALW.⁷²

The OSCE Document on SALW and its supplementary decisions have led to an intensive cooperation between participating States that is unique in terms of its combination of standardization, exchange of experience and project work. The OSCE has established a considerable track record and has successfully implemented more than 120 projects worth more than 100 million Euros addressing a wide variety of SALW and SCA threats and contributing to joint security as well as to saving lives. Since the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA establish that any participating State that has identified a security risk linked to the

⁶⁹ FSC.DEC/6/08, 18 June 2008 - <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/8/32461.pdf>.

⁷⁰ MC.DOC/5/18, 7 December 2018.

⁷¹ Minimum Standards for National Procedures for the Deactivation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (2020 <https://www.osce.org/forum-for-security-cooperation/383988>); Minimum Standards for National Procedures for the Deactivation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (2020 <https://www.osce.org/forum-for-security-cooperation/383988>); National Procedures for the Destruction of Small Arms and Light Weapons (2021 <https://www.osce.org/forum-for-security-cooperation/492949>); National Procedures for Stockpile Management, Security and Destruction of Man-portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS) (2021 <https://www.osce.org/resources/510893>); Procedures for Management of Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition (2021 <https://www.osce.org/resources/510899>); National Procedures for Stockpile Management and Security of Small Arms and Light Weapons (2022 <https://www.osce.org/forum-for-security-cooperation/511204>); Ammunition Marking, Registration and Record-Keeping (2022 <https://www.osce.org/forum-for-security-cooperation/513013>).

⁷² FSC.DEC/2/10, 26 May 2010, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/e/68450.pdf>.

presence of surplus stockpiles of SALW and SCA, explosive material and detonating devices, and needs assistance, may request the help of the international community through the OSCE, an important area of the FSC's work is the implementation of assistance projects supporting States in the destruction and/or the secure and safe management of stockpiles of SALW and conventional ammunition. A proven and well-functioning Assistance Mechanism has provided a vehicle for matching the needs expressed by requesting participating States with appropriate technical, financial, consultative and other assistance through the OSCE. It has been invoked for the first time by Belarus in July 2003, to address the security and destruction of its stockpiles of surplus SALW.

The Assistance Mechanism has been utilized by participating States for over 20 years. In 2016, the Ministerial Declaration on *OSCE Assistance Projects in the Field of Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition* established that OSCE projects had resulted in the destruction of more than 50,000 small arms and light weapons and 18,000 tonnes of conventional ammunition, in upgrades of safety and security at 95 storage sites, and in the enhancement of stockpile management capacity.⁷³ At the date of the 20th anniversary of the OSCE Document on SALW (2020), 17 extra-budgetary projects were being implemented in different participating States with a total volume of 30 million Euros. At a March 2021 donor meeting, more than 10 million Euros in contributions were pledged to strengthen action against illicit proliferation of SALW and SCA.

FSC projects have been addressing a wide array of security and safety risks related to:

- demilitarizing surplus and obsolete conventional weapons and ammunition, explosive material and detonating devices;
- reducing or even fully destroying military related hazardous toxic waste, liquid propellants and rocket fuel components;
- upgrading degraded physical infrastructure and poor stockpile management and security practices;
- enhancing stockpile and security management regulations and procedures;
- removing of explosive remnants of war (ERW) and landmines; and
- combating illicit trafficking of SALW and CA.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, support has been provided for safety and security upgrades at storage sites for SALW and conventional ammunition, and for a chemistry laboratory in which ammunition surveillance is performed. In Ukraine, the OSCE has been engaged in capacity-building for humanitarian demining and for combating trafficking in SALW. Equally relevant projects have been conducted in Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Tajikistan.⁷⁴ On 5-6 October 2021, a meeting to review the implementation

⁷³ MC.DOC/3/16, 9 December 2016.

⁷⁴ A synopsis of status of SALW and Conventional Ammunition projects is regularly issued by the CPC.

of practical assistance projects on SALW and SCA was held under the auspices of the Austrian Chair of the FSC and gathered more than 200 participants. Assistance to the participating States has increased co-operation and information exchange between the FSC and the OSCE field operations, something which could be further enhanced.

“The OSCE has long been a pioneer and leading actor in promoting openness and transparency in military matters.”

Angela Kane, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, “Commitments on Conventional Arms Transfers: Synergies of UN and OSCE Efforts”, Address to the FSC, 27 May 2015

Finally, the information exchange on SALW is an important part of the commitments of participating States and constitute an essential CSBM in its own right. Provisions of the Document on SALW, limited to information on small arms export, have been supplemented by many subsequent FSC decisions related to information exchange on, *inter alia*: the points of contacts on SALW and SCA; techniques and procedures for the destruction of SALW; present regulations concerning brokering activities with regard to SALW; national marking systems used in the manufacture and/or import of SALW, and; national procedures for the control over manufacture of SALW.

Exchange of information on SALW has been the vector of an intensive cooperation with international organizations, particularly the United Nations, in accordance with OSCE’s profile as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. Right in 2002, the Forum shared its model answer for the information exchange on SALW with UN member States in order to support the relevant efforts in the United Nations. General information about the Handbook of Best Practice Guides was presented at the UN Biennial Meeting on SALW in July 2004. In parallel, a UN First Committee consensus resolution recognized the work of the FSC in combating illicit trade of SALW in all its aspects and was adopted by the General Assembly. Since then, the FSC has spared no effort to achieve coherence and complementarity with the relevant United Nations framework. It has valuably contributed and promoted a coherent approach to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its International Tracing Instrument. It has supported harmonization of the templates on the information exchange on SALW and conventional arms transfers respectively used by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the OSCE, and facilitated the online submission of national information on SALW to the OSCE and the United Nations.



Ambassador Philip Griffiths, Head of the Wassenaar Arrangement Secretariat, addressing the FSC on 2 May 2018 (*Micky Kroell/OSCE*)



Mr. Rashid Alimov, Secretary General of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO), addressing the 852nd FSC plenary meeting on 10 May 2017 (*Micky Kroell/OSCE*)

Similarly, the FSC's work on SALW and SCA has been an opportunity to reach out with the OSCE Partners for Co-operation. Right in 1996, the participating States agreed to consider "extending, upon request and within existing resources, the FSC's experience to partner States in the adjacent Mediterranean area." The Partners have been invited to some of the Forum's meetings in order to increase interaction with them and identify areas of common interest and concern, and possibilities for concrete initiatives. Following an assessment mission on SALW to Tunisia, FSC Decision No. 2/16 (27 April 2016) enabled the provision of assistance to OSCE Partners for Co-operation and welcomed FSC-related activities on SALW and SCA with them in the context of the FSC, using procedures outlined in the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA.

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda

Adopted in October 2000, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 is a landmark document addressing the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls, recognizing the importance of women's equal participation in maintaining and promoting peace and security, and the need to enhance protection of women and girls and their rights. UNSC Res. 1325 and subsequent resolutions provide a framework for furthering the role of women in matters of peace and security at all levels.

In 2011, the ministers gathered in the Lithuanian capital, in what happened to be the last ministerial decision dedicated to "Issues relevant to the FSC" (*see above*), tasked the FSC to "Examine ways that it can assist in the implementation in the OSCE region of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions on the issue of gender and security".⁷⁵ In order to support the FSC Chairpersonship, the FSC Chair's Coordinator on matters relating to UNSC Res. 1325 was established.

⁷⁵ Ministerial Decision 7/11, MC.DEC/7/11/Corr.1, 7 December 2011.

In ten years, WPS has been mainstreamed in the FSC agenda – to include the security sector as well as policy-making, planning and implementation processes related to arms control, CSBMs, disarmament, and non-proliferation. The FSC has included a gender perspective both in its normative tools and its assistance projects, especially on SALW/SCA.

“What role would the FSC have in future conventional arms control efforts in general and in particular on integrating gender perspectives?”

Austrian FSC Chair, Concept Note for Security Dialogue on “The future of conventional arms control”, 29 September 2021

In 2020, Turkey set the WPS agenda as one of the priorities of its Chairpersonship. On the same tracks, the Ukrainian FSC Chair, together with Albania’s OSCE Chairpersonship, commemorated 20 years of UNSC Res. 1325 and brought the contribution of the Forum to the 3rd OSCE-wide Gender Equality Review Conference, in June of that same year. On 10 March 2021, WPS was the topic of the joint meeting of the FSC and the PC held to mark International Women’s Day. The joint session, organized under the United States’ FSC Chairpersonship and Sweden’s 2021 OSCE Chairpersonship, provided a platform for discussing UNSC Res. 1325 and subsequent resolutions, and concrete steps toward their implementation, as well as gender equality more broadly. It also explored how the FSC works to integrate and empower women. In parallel, such initiatives as the Women in the First Dimension Network,⁷⁶ launched by the FSC in March 2020, continue to grow and thrive. According to the last Austrian Chairpersonship of the Forum, in 2021, on average 27% women and 73% men participated in the FSC-related meetings.



Ambassador Mara Marinaki, EU/EEAS Principal Advisor for Gender and UNSCR 1325, former Permanent Representative of Greece to the OSCE (2007-2011), Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council in 2009, addressing the 832nd FSC plenary meeting on 12 Oct. 2016 (Micky Kroell/OSCE)

⁷⁶ See the factsheet on Women in 1st Dimension, FSC.DEL/59/20, 13 March 2020.

3-The FSC and the crisis in and around Ukraine

The FSC has long suffered from the harsher political climate between Russia and the West. But the Forum's agenda has been particularly influenced by the crisis in and around Ukraine and the open conflict that broke out in 2022. Theoretically, the situation in Eastern Europe since 2014 should have highlighted the FSC's relevance in providing a platform for dialogue among the participating States to overcome the current risks and challenges posed to Ukraine as well as to the whole OSCE region. Concretely, alas, it has only further reduced the participating States' room for maneuver. The Ukraine crisis might have been both a "curse and a blessing" for the OSCE, as Secretary General Thomas Greminger noted back in 2014: for the FSC, it has surely been a curse.

"The noticeable erosion of the European security order through a series of conflicts (...) ha(s) a direct impact on the work of the FSC. Trust is the most important asset in the OSCE - but it is disappearing day by day."

German Deputy Foreign Minister Niels Annen as the opening of Germany's Chairpersonship of the FSC, on 9 Sept. 2020

It was not the first time that the FSC was facing such a crisis. The Forum had been involved in debates related to the first (1994-1995) and second (1999-2000) wars in Chechnya,⁷⁷ as well as to the Kosovo crisis in 1999, through discussion about compliance with CSBM documents.⁷⁸ On 30 April 2008, the Finnish Chairpersonship-in-Office officially requested the support of the FSC, under the Estonian stewardship, to provide with the Forum's expert advice on the incident involving an unmanned airborne vehicle over Abkhazia, Georgia, on 20 April 2008. Although the decision on the PC's request could not reach consensus at a Preparatory Committee and a special Permanent Council convened on 2 May, a series of four Security Dialogues was used by the Estonian Chair to seek advice and get feedback from the participating States, also on Georgia's request to activate the "Bucharest mechanism" and to send qualified experts from OSCE participating States to the field with the purpose of verifying radar data, video footage, technical parameters of the suspicious fighter jet and the place of its take-off, and establishing facts. In parallel, the mutual activation of the mechanism for Consultation and co-operation as regards unusual military activities (paragraph 16.2 of Chapter III of the VD, designed to voice concerns and find appropriate ways to ensure transparency, thereby dispelling such concerns and deescalating tensions) by the Russian

⁷⁷ See Zdzislaw Lachowski/Adam Daniel Rotfeld, "Success or Failure? CSBMs in the Post-Cold War Environment", in: IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook* 2001, Baden-Baden 2002, pp. 322 and f.

⁷⁸ On 6 April 1999, Belarus requested clarification from the United States of America, United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, France, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia regarding NATO's military operation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This request was in accordance with Chapter II (to become Chap. III later on) on "Risk Reduction" of the Vienna Document 1994. On 15 April 1999, six days after it received the expected responses, Belarus made a statement during a joint FSC/PC meeting, to which the United States and France responded.

Federation and Georgia, led to a series of exchanges between the two sides. Further discussions on the incident were held at the 32nd joint meeting of the FSC and PC on 4 June, prior to the three back-to-back meetings convened that same day with Georgian and Russian representatives in accordance with para. 16, followed by three consecutive joint FSC-PC meetings on 11 June. In a letter addressed on 26 June 2008 to the Finnish Chairpersonship-in-Office, the Estonian Chair of the FSC provided an account of the discussions at the Forum, expressed a few recommendations and its readiness “to provide support to the Permanent Council should you decide that there would be a follow-up on any of the abovementioned recommendations. In particular, the Chairperson of the FSC is of the opinion that the FSC could focus its discussions/activities on the possible application of the existing OSCE mechanisms and procedures, particularly those contained in the Vienna Document 1999, and even engaging in creative thinking to elaborate new approaches to the similar incidents.”

Although the use by both Georgia and the Russian Federation of an existing OSCE mechanism to discuss their security concerns was welcomed as evidence of the continued relevance of the OSCE and its mechanisms and procedures, the August 2008 conflict between the two countries has launched the debate on whether the Vienna Document is just a so-called “good weather” instrument, or still has a role to play in crisis situation.

Never before was the Vienna Document as widely used than in 2014, after the annexation of Crimea and the secession of the Donbas. For the first time, a series of successive activities under this instrument took place in close relationship with ongoing military operations. The Chapter III “Risk Reduction” was heavily referred to by the participating States. The mechanism for Consultation and co-operation as regards unusual military activities was invoked 18 times, which resulted in three joint meetings of the PC and FSC.⁷⁹ In March 2014, responding to Ukraine’s invitation to conduct a multinational military verification mission to dispel concerns about unusual military activities in the territory of Ukraine, particularly in the Crimean peninsula, pursuant to Chapter III paragraph 18 of the VD, 30 OSCE participating States sent 56 unarmed military and civilian personnel to the field, without being able to dispel military concerns about Crimea. This was the first time that the mechanism “Voluntary hosting of visits to dispel concerns about military activities” was activated. 24 countries also decided to send military inspectors and observers to Ukraine in accordance with the Vienna Document’s Chapters IX (“Compliance and Verification”) and X (“Regional Measures”) and conducted 17 verification activities;⁸⁰ 10 countries conducted 6 verification activities in the

⁷⁹ On 7, 17 and 30 April 2014. In total, in March and April 2014, the FSC held four joint meetings with the Permanent Council to assess the situation with respect to Ukraine. Chapter III on Risk Reduction was invoked 21 times in 2014-2015. On the implementation of the VD in the 2014 Ukrainian crisis, see I. Prezelj and D. Harangozo, “Effectiveness of the Vienna Document CSBM regime: Assessment of Experts Perceptions”, University of Ljubljana, Defence Research Center, Research report – Version 1.9, Oct. 2014, pp. 51-54.

⁸⁰ In this context, it is important to recall the detention of a German-led VD inspection team and its Ukrainian escort on 25 April in Slavyansk, Eastern Ukraine, by irregular forces loyal to the so-called “people’s mayor of Slavyansk”. The members of the team, comprised of German, Danish, Polish and Czech nationals, were released on 3 May.

Russian Federation. All in all, the notifications under the Vienna Document, during 2014, failed to properly address the situation in Eastern Ukraine, Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

The Ukraine crisis certainly underscored the potential value of conventional arms control and CSBMs. However, it has provided another evidence of the limited capabilities of tools that very much depend on the political will of the participating States for their implementation: the Vienna Document works, but cannot bring effects without political willingness of the parties. The crisis also highlighted the need to address the shortcomings of this instrument.



Brigadier General V. Batut, Ministry of the Armed Forces, France, and OSCE Secretary General T. Greminger, at the 911th plenary meeting of the FSC, on 27 March 2019 (*Micky Kroell/OSCE*)

With this regard, the FSC could have offered a venue for taking stock of lessons learned in Ukraine, identifying shortfalls and possible improvements of the OSCE politico-military toolbox, and reinvigorating dialogue regarding the application of the Vienna Document including in crisis situations, as repeatedly suggested by the EU in 2015. Likewise, the Forum could have played a valuable role in contributing to the implementation of the Minsk agreements, and discussing additional and complementary measures, for instance on the monitoring of the withdrawal of heavy weapons in a fragile security situation, as suggested in 2015 by Austria on behalf of a group of participating States. Worth being mentioned is the initiative of the CPC's FSC Support Section to establish a repository programme to prepare the OSCE, in close co-operation with the Ukrainian authorities and with donors, to promptly implement a series of disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation actions once a ceasefire agreement would be in place.

However, the events did not offer the best atmosphere for such initiatives. Instead, the plenary sessions of the FSC have been regularly used for presentations and debates, but without leading to tangible results. The FSC's role has been limited to the passive hearing of statements on the security situation in and around Ukraine, calling on all sides to adhere to the Minsk Agreements, to take immediate action to consolidate ceasefires and move towards a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE commitments and principles, expressing

concerns about the continued presence and use of proscribed weapons, and deploring restrictions to freedom of movement of the OSCE Security Monitoring Mission's monitors.

"We should remain mindful that the OSCE and its FSC were created in times of crises for times of crises."

Statement by Switzerland at the 1014th plenary meeting of the FSC, on 15 June 2022

Austria's efforts, as FSC Chair from September to December 2021, to revisit the 1996 Framework for Arms Control and to address conventional risks and challenges to security and the future of conventional arms control, were brutally interrupted by the invasion of Ukraine.

On 14 February 2022, Lithuania, also on behalf of Latvia and Estonia, called for consultations with Belarus with regard to unusual military activities on this country's territory, namely the joint Russian-Belarusian military exercise "Union Resolve 2022", and requested a special joint meeting of the Permanent Council and the FSC, which took place on 16 February. Ukraine then approached the OSCE Chairpersonship to initiate a further joint meeting of the OSCE's two regular decision-making bodies, which took place two days after (18 February). Appropriate measures – as referred to in paragraph 16.3.1.2 of the Vienna Document – for stabilizing the situation and halting activities that give rise to concern, were put forwards, notably by the EU. At the joint FSC-PC meeting on 18 February, Lithuania also suggested the application of measures based on the OSCE document "Stabilizing measures for localized crisis situations", such as transparency measures. All that with no avail. "We have to painfully recognize that all prevention and transparency efforts, including the Risk Reduction Mechanism of the Vienna Document and other CSBMs were not able to prevent this war.", a delegation lucidly assessed after the start of the hostilities.

Since 24 February 2022, business as usual seems no longer possible at the FSC. A number of participating States have decided to keep their engagement in the Forum to a bare minimum, particularly under the Chairpersonship of Belarus, during the second session. Confrontation is escalating, as evidenced by the use of acrimonious "right of reply" statements. While, over the first months of the war in Ukraine, the participating States have consistently rejected the idea of "walk outs", not to jeopardize the last remaining open diplomatic channels of communication nor substantially harm the FSC and its work, one delegation left the *Neuer Saal* on 8 June 2022.

Once again, since 2014, the FSC's platform for discussions has remained untapped to the full potential. The war against Ukraine is likely to continue influencing the Forum's work in the near future. Rebuilding trust, at the FSC just as elsewhere, will not be an easy task.

Conclusion

In thirty years, the FSC has achieved much. The reading of the Consolidated References to the FSC Mandates, regularly updated by the CPC, says a lot about the Forum's impressive record over three decades and its normative *acquis*, which serves as a reference and a model for other regions in the world and other international organizations. This unequalled technical expertise should serve as a common solid basis for a way forward.

Unfortunately, the eruption of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has intruded on the FSC's daily work, bringing the implementation of the OSCE politico-military instruments extensively to a standstill and compelling the participating States to refrain from or postpone activities under the auspices of the Vienna Document. More sadly, the worrying context of heightened international tensions in which the 1000th session of the Forum took place, has further overshadowed this accomplishment. The current state of affairs is far from the constructive dialogue the FSC experienced in the 1990s – although, as previously underlined, political circumstances were far from being untroubled at that time either. Among the four insignia of the FSC Chairpersonship which the outgoing Chairperson solemnly passes to his/her successor - an Irish lifebelt meant to help the Chairpersonship to survive the hurdles it encounters; a Kazakh *Kamcha* leather horse-riding whip to speed up and increase the productivity of the Forum; a small replica of a Kyrgyz yurt representing harmony at home, the end state the participating States are striving for; and the mace offered by Ukraine on 22 July 2020 -, the first one has probably been used much more than the three others...

"This Millenium plenary session underlines our shared responsibility to live up to our FSC commitments in both letter and in spirit – and to once again engage with each other in good faith to ensure that we can work collectively towards trust, cooperation and success"

Ambassador Neil Bush, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, at the "Millenium" plenary meeting of the FSC, 9 February 2022

The time lost will never come back and it is necessary to look forward. The continued value of the FSC as a platform for exchanging views on pertinent issues related to the politico-military aspects of security needs to be reaffirmed and promoted, despite the difficult current security environment. The Forum can play its part in restoring confidence among participating States across the OSCE area. The 50th anniversary of the negotiations on the Helsinki Final Act, which went on from 1973 to 1975, should offer the FSC the place it deserves. It is in times like today, where tensions and mistrust prevail, that the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation is most needed. The Euro-Atlantic region needs the FSC, just as it did thirty years ago

