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## From Lisbon to Hamburg – Supporting a New Start in Conventional Arms Control in Europe

*Arms Control and Confidence- and Security-Building Measures under Germany's OSCE Chairmanship in 2016*

The OSCE Ministerial Council in Hamburg in December 2016 was a milestone for Europe's security. Contrary to expectations, it proved possible to adopt significant ministerial declarations, particularly in the field of conventional arms control and confidence-building measures. The agreement reached in Hamburg, entitled "From Lisbon to Hamburg: Declaration on the Twentieth Anniversary of the OSCE Framework for Arms Control", does not merely have a politically symbolic impact, but also includes a clear mandate to create a "structured dialogue" on security-policy challenges in Europe and their implications for arms-control policy. This means that a crucial step has been taken towards putting Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier's arms-control initiative firmly on the OSCE agenda.

### *Cracks in the European Arms-Control Architecture*

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For many years after the end of the Cold War, it seemed obvious that the common principles and obligations laid down in the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act, and the Charter of Paris would form the foundations for peace, stability, and co-operation in Europe in the future. However, cracks have developed in these foundations. Russia's annexation of Crimea in violation of international law and Moscow's ongoing intervention in eastern Ukraine have destroyed trust that was painstakingly built up over the course of 40 years, calling into question our co-operative security architecture, which is based on common values and principles, and plunging Europe into its most serious security-policy crisis since the end of the Cold War. The effects of this crisis can be felt almost every day. For example, 26 years after the end of the confrontation between the Eastern and Western blocs, large-scale military exercises are once again being held in Europe, military aircraft are playing cat and mouse over the Baltic and Black Seas, and concern is rising about the possibility of escalation – intended or accidental.

In chairing the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2016, Germany consciously took on a responsibility, doing so not despite, but rather because of the current challenges for security policy in Europe. In these difficult times, it is particularly important to preserve, and

where possible enhance, the OSCE as an indispensable forum for dialogue, security, and confidence-building in Europe. In addition to its crisis- and conflict-management activities in Ukraine, the German federal government worked hard during the Chairmanship year to put the OSCE on the right track for the future and the long and difficult path back to a co-operative security architecture in Europe. In doing so, it took a three-pronged approach of renewing dialogue, rebuilding trust, and restoring security.

The instruments for conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) created within the OSCE framework have been one of the pillars of co-operative European security architecture since the beginning. The path to these instruments was paved by a lengthy, and at times difficult, dialogue conducted over 40 years ago under the auspices of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) between senior politicians and members of the military on fundamental issues of European security and a more stable military balance in Europe. One of the most important outcomes of this dialogue was an extensive network of interlinked and mutually reinforcing arms-control commitments aimed at containing potential movements towards escalation in advance.

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) concluded in 1990 between the then member states of NATO and the Warsaw Pact is a key element of this arms-control architecture. To date, it has led to the destruction of over 60,000 heavy weapons in Europe. In particular, its regional ceilings on the numbers of armed forces that can be stationed have played a major role in fostering military restraint, thus enhancing security and stability in Europe. The Vienna Document (VD) and its mechanisms for minimizing risk and building confidence (e.g. by announcing and observing large-scale military exercises), and co-operative observation flights under the Treaty on Open Skies, have also significantly increased trust and predictability among armed forces in the OSCE area. At the OSCE Ministerial Council in Lisbon in 1996, this system of mutually reinforcing agreements was designated the "Lisbon Framework for Arms Control" in the OSCE area.

Today, some 20 years later, this conventional arms-control architecture, which proved to be a reliable guarantor of security and stability for many years, is showing visible cracks. It has not kept pace with the military, technological and, above all, political changes in Europe. For example, the adapted CFE Treaty negotiated in 1999 never entered into force due to Russia's incomplete fulfilment of its commitments to withdraw its forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova and Georgia. Since 2007, we have also had to deal with Russia's unilateral suspension of the earlier CFE Treaty. A large number of crises and regional conflicts have revealed clear limitations in the applicability of the existing instruments, while the Ukraine crisis has widened the rifts between Russia and the West. The mechanisms of the VD and the Treaty on Open Skies, which are actually aimed at fostering greater confidence and stability, are increasingly being circumvented via the

exploitation of gaps in their regulations, and the spirit of the treaties is being ignored.

In short, the OSCE-based arms-control architecture is in crisis. As a result, there is a danger of a new arms race in Europe. We must prevent this from happening.

### *Bringing Structure to the Future of Conventional Arms Control*

One initiative related to the Lisbon Framework for Arms Control that was launched during Germany's OSCE Chairmanship in 2016 is particularly noteworthy.

In the run-up to the informal meeting of OSCE foreign ministers in Potsdam in September 2016, Foreign Minister Steinmeier called for a new start in conventional arms control. The aim of this initiative is to return to greater predictability, military restraint, and transparency in view of current developments in European security. Alongside efforts to update the Vienna Document's confidence- and security-building measures, the arms-control initiative was one of the priorities of Germany's year as OSCE Chair. In this regard, Foreign Minister Steinmeier called for the urgent launch of a structured dialogue on current security challenges and the future of conventional arms control in Europe.

Both the informal meeting of OSCE foreign ministers in Potsdam and numerous subsequent bilateral talks confirmed the interest of many OSCE participating States in this initiative. This was impressively underlined by the joint declaration by the German foreign minister with thirteen of his counterparts (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Slovakia, and Spain) ahead of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Hamburg.

It would not have been possible to reach agreement on a joint approach without this support and the growing momentum found for the initiative at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Hamburg. Following difficult negotiations, it proved possible for the first time in over a decade to adopt a Ministerial Council Declaration on conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures ("From Lisbon to Hamburg") marking the twentieth anniversary of the Lisbon Framework for Arms Control. In this declaration, the Foreign Ministers agreed to launch a structured dialogue on challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area and their concrete implications for the future of conventional arms control. This dialogue will begin in 2017 under the auspices of the OSCE, thus sending an important signal in opposition to the erosion of the European arms-control architecture and in support of a fundamental modernization of the same. It is now vital that we bring this structured dialogue to life.

*Reinforcing Existing Pillars, Adding New Pillars*

The aims of Germany's OSCE Chairmanship in 2016 included making progress on the overdue updating of the Vienna Document. Along with numerous other countries, the Federal Government actively endeavoured to make this important document on military confidence-building fit for the future. Germany's proposals on risk reduction, improving crisis resilience, doing more to prevent crises and hazardous incidents, and increasing the transparency of military activities met with broad approval and were actively supported by over 20 countries in some cases. Unfortunately, it was not possible to overcome Russia's blockade of the revised version of the VD, which was due to be reissued at the end of 2016. However, the large number of detailed amendments that were suggested during 2016 laid important groundwork for continuing the debate on updating the VD under Austria's OSCE Chairmanship in 2017.

Working closely with the countries that successively chaired the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) in 2016 (the Netherlands, Poland, and Portugal), Germany's OSCE Chairmanship enhanced the OSCE's role as a platform and inclusive forum for a wide-ranging European security dialogue. For example, a High-Level Military Doctrine Seminar organized jointly with the Netherlands was held in Vienna in February 2016 for the first time in many years. Along with the Polish and Portuguese FSC Chairmanships, Germany put the focus on the role of arms control and confidence- and security-building measures in security in Europe at various high-level events (e.g. the Annual Security Review Conference and the joint meetings of the Permanent Council and the FSC).

In deciding to again procure its own national observation aircraft, Germany also gave an important signal in support of the Treaty on Open Skies – a further key component of Europe's co-operative arms-control architecture. Many other States Parties to the Treaty on Open Skies will benefit from this observation aircraft by carrying out joint observation flights. Since the tragic crash of its last observation aircraft in 1997, Germany has had to use aircraft provided by other States Parties to carry out its co-operative observation flights. Since the Treaty on Open Skies entered into force, information on States Parties' armed forces and civil and military infrastructure acquired in over 1,300 flights has significantly boosted confidence-building in the Euro-Atlantic area. Moreover, the Treaty on Open Skies is the European conventional arms-control regime on which Russia works most actively.

Alongside more traditional conventional arms control in Europe, however, other important related areas of OSCE work should not be overlooked. The OSCE has played a leading role worldwide in the small arms and light weapons (SALW) segment since the publication of its document on this topic in 2000. The annual exchange of information ensures full transparency on stockpiles, exports, and imports of such weapons. This information is to be

made public in the future. On request, participating States also receive support from the OSCE for projects in areas including the destruction of surplus weapons and ammunition stockpiles and better securing of repositories. This combination of norm-setting, information exchange, and projects makes the OSCE unique. This is one of the reasons why the Federal Government has increased its contribution to the relevant OSCE project trust fund once again. In 2017, it will provide 1.8 million euros. The declaration adopted by the Ministerial Council in Hamburg on OSCE assistance projects in the field of SALW highlights the current benefits and future prospects of these activities, which also play a role in terrorism prevention, and shines a political spotlight on a field of co-operation in which progress is being made despite ongoing crises and disputes.

A further confidence-building instrument is the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. It links key concepts of the Helsinki Final Act relating to security and co-operation with issues concerning the internal deployment of armed forces in a free, democratic society in line with the rule of law. From a contemporary point of view, it is thus a surprisingly modern and innovative document and has lost none of its relevance. During Germany's OSCE Chairmanship, numerous events were held to raise awareness of the Code of Conduct among our partners in and outside the OSCE. A discussion on comprehensive parliamentary control of the security sector, including all armed, police, and paramilitary forces, and intelligence services was launched for the first time at the annual conference on the Code of Conduct, which took place at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin in June 2016.

During 2016, the OSCE demonstrated its ability to cope with new threats and the challenges they pose for security policy. A good example is the ever broadening and accelerating spread of digital technology. On the one hand, this process creates enormous opportunities – and these should be grasped, not least because they also offer prospects for enhancing security and co-operation in Europe. At the same time, however, the OSCE participating States must respond to new potential threats and escalation scenarios arising from the digital revolution. The agreement reached on a further set of cyber-security confidence-building measures was another achievement of Germany's OSCE Chairmanship. In view of the attribution problems inherent to electronic communications, i.e., the challenge of attributing cyber-operations to real actors, confidence-building is of particularly great importance in this field. Measures aimed at promoting transparency and co-operation help to prevent or interrupt escalation spirals resulting from cyber-incidents. Germany has developed initiatives and provided impetus for the development of further confidence-building measures and more effective implementation of existing measures through numerous position papers. The Ministerial Council Decision adopted in Hamburg expressly supports this approach and gives clear instructions to continue the work on cyber-security in the multi-dimensional working group.

### *Conclusion*

The field of OSCE-based conventional arms control and confidence-building measures was given a significant boost during the Germany's OSCE Chairmanship. Renewed dialogue between the OSCE participating States was put firmly on the agenda, particularly as regards conventional arms control. These positive developments must now be made permanent and concrete in close co-operation with future Chairmanships (Austria in 2017 and Italy in 2018). Sceptics will protest that the current security climate in the OSCE area is unfavourable to new initiatives. But this must be opposed by noting that conventional arms control and CSBMs were never instruments for fair weather conditions – on the contrary, they arise from the need for greater stability and predictability, i.e., for greater security, specifically in spells of turbulence. The outlook was stormy at the time of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Hamburg, but – continuing the metaphor – it proved possible to circumvent the shoals and, at least in some areas, to chart a course together to new destinations. This doubtlessly contributed to the overall positive and encouraging results of Germany's OSCE Chairmanship in 2016.