

OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation opening session: UK statement

I would like to warmly welcome H.E. Peter Launsky and thank him for clearly outlining Austria's priorities for the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) this trimester. I would also like to thank Armenia for its chairing of the FSC last trimester, and welcome Azerbaijan to the Troika.

Mr Chair, Austria assumes the FSC Chair at a particularly challenging time. First amongst the challenges remains Russia's blatant violation of OSCE principles and commitments, through its ongoing aggression against Ukraine, and its illegal annexation of Crimea. While the levels of violence remain lower than before the July 2020 measures to strengthen the ceasefire, we continue to observe an increasing upward trend in ceasefire violations, restrictions to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), and targeting of SMM assets. This is against a backdrop of continuing civilian casualties and human suffering caused by the actions of Russia and the armed formations it backs.

We continue to have significant concerns about the heightened tensions caused by Russia's increased and sustained military activity on Ukraine's border and in illegally annexed Crimea. We are disappointed that Russia did not, and still chooses not to, engage with OSCE processes and mechanisms available to provide the necessary transparency with regards to this activity. Russia is also dismantling existing OSCE efforts to building confidence and enhance transparency, as indicated by their announcement last week that they refuse to extend the mandate of the OSCE Border Observer Mission – effectively shutting it down.

The UK strongly supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, including its territorial waters. We have consistently stood with Ukraine in opposing all instances of Russian aggression towards Ukraine and we will continue to do so, including through sanctions, together with our international partners. The UK does not and will not recognise Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea.

Mr Chair, in December we will celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the [Lisbon Framework for Arms Control](#). It is a timely opportunity to reflect on the current state of the OSCE security architecture and the events which led to the deteriorating security situation we find ourselves in today.

It has been repeatedly emphasised in this forum that for Conventional Arms Control and military confidence and security building measures to be effective, all participating States must fully and faithfully implement the commitments they have undertaken. But Russia's actions – as mentioned above – show that they have little interest in doing so.

Mr Chair, we believe that before embarking down a path advocating for a new security architecture for the OSCE, we first must understand why certain

participating States are not fully implementing their existing obligations in letter and spirit. This failure to implement is not driven by issues with the content of existing Treaties or agreements. The failure is a failure of will. The will of certain participating States to engage in good faith, and the will to genuinely seek to build transparency and trust. We must actively question the motives for why they do not seek to do this.

However, we are clear that the transparency and confidence building tools of the OSCE are in need of updating. We have long argued that a modernised Vienna Document, fully implemented in letter and spirit by all OSCE participating States, would be a powerful tool in increasing reciprocal military transparency and reducing the risks of misperception and unintended escalation. We know from Tirana that [forty-four other participating States agree](#). And we call on Russia to constructively engage in this important and long overdue task.

Mr Chair, the promotion of the Women, Peace and Security agenda is not an attempt by some OSCE participating States to impose their values on others – women's rights are human rights. On a practical level – women's full, equal and meaningful participation ensures better outcomes, whether that be in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict; increasing the operational effectiveness of our armed forces; or increasing the impact of projects on small arms and light weapons (SALW) and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA). In June the 10th Annual Discussion on the Code of Conduct reinforced the call of fifty-two participating States to implement the concrete menu of actions in the [Tirana Joint Statement](#).

And so we recognise the intent to give particular emphasis on the integration of women in the armed forces at the Code of Conduct Security Dialogue. Thank you for your comments today on mainstreaming Women, Peace & Security and UNSCR 1325 into the work of the FSC. However, we regret there is not a dedicated Security Dialogue in this crucial area – recognising the overwhelming support of participating States for furthering implementation of UNSCR 1325 at and through the OSCE and the FSC.

We welcome discussion on SALW & SCA which can and do pose a serious threat to societies. Their diversion and misuse cost hundreds of thousands of lives every year, undermine security and sustainable development, and fuel conflict, crime and terrorism.

We continue to value the Structured Dialogue as an additional platform for discussing current security threats and challenges, including hybrid. The joint Forum for Security Cooperation/ Permanent Council (FSC/PC) on the 3rd of November will be a good opportunity to take stock on progress thus far and to look forward to where our Dialogue may go in 2022.

I would like to conclude by congratulating Austria on taking on the role of the FSC Chair in this trimester, an important one as we approach the Ministerial Council. I wish you Secretary General, Ambassador Raunig, and your able team here in Vienna the best of luck in the coming months and assure you of the full support of the UK Delegation.