



**FSC Chairmanship: Belgium**

**LETTER FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-  
OPERATION TO THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND,  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE TWENTY-NINTH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL  
COUNCIL OF THE OSCE**

As Chairperson of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), it is my honour to inform you about the Forum's activities in 2022.

During 2022, the FSC Chairpersonships worked in close co-operation to ensure continuity and efficiency in the implementation of the Forum's annual work programme.

Since the last Ministerial Council of the OSCE, several initiatives undertaken by participating States led to the adoption of two **decisions**, both designed to support the implementation of existing politico-military commitments in the field of conventional ammunition marking, registration and record-keeping, and the exchange of military information in electronic format.

This year, the OSCE has witnessed an unprecedented security situation and geopolitical tensions with the **unjustified and unprovoked war** against Ukraine launched on 24 February 2022. The war against Ukraine brought a negative impact on the whole security architecture in Europe and beyond, jeopardized security and cooperation - the very essence of the organization. The war caused the largest humanitarian crisis Europe has seen in decades. In its response to the unprecedented security situation, the FSC, in close co-ordination with the Chairmanship of the Permanent Council and the OSCE Secretariat, have conducted the FSC's work in the mode of "no business as usual". The FSC Chairpersonships continuously highlighted the importance of co-operation and unity amongst participating States fostering crises prevention and management by utilizing available tools and keeping dialogue ongoing.

Against this backdrop and based on the decisions about dates, agenda and modalities that participating States adopted in October and November 2021, during the FSC Chairmanship of Azerbaijan the **thirty-second Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting (AIAM)** was held in March 2022. Led by Norway and Uzbekistan, this meeting provided an opportunity for participating States to raise and discuss the present and future implementation of agreed confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) in the light of shared fundamental principles and commitments.

The FSC contributed to the 2022 **Annual Security Review Conference**, contributing to the exchange of views within its mandate.

In April 2022, Vienna Document 2011, Chapter III on the **Risk Reduction** mechanism for consultation and co-operation as regards unusual military activities, was invoked twice to discuss security concerns. Following consultations to discuss the matters giving rise to concern, two special joint meetings of the Permanent Council (PC) and the FSC were convened, during which the situation was assessed. The delegations in attendance focused on providing recommendations to stabilize the situation and halt activities giving rise to concern.

The Forum's meetings this year and the **security dialogues** conducted despite the difficult climate among the OSCE participating States underscore the FSC's importance as a platform for dialogue, addressing security issues of concern.

By maintaining the FSC as an important platform for the exchange of information and views on politico-military aspects of security among the OSCE participating States, in addition to the regular exchanges on the war against Ukraine under the FSC's agenda item "General Statements", the following security dialogues took place: Compliance with International Humanitarian Law and Protection of Civilians; Mine Action with the focus on UNSCR 2365; Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition – OSCE Commitments and Lessons Learned; the European Security Architecture: the Role of Non-Aligned Countries; Countering Terrorism in all its Forms and Manifestations; Post-Conflict Rehabilitation and Peace-Building: Lessons Learned in the OSCE Region and the Way Ahead; Children and Armed Conflict; Full, Equal and Meaningful Participation of Women; Explosive Hazards in the OSCE Region; Armed Forces and the Environment; the Code of Conduct revisited. In total, the FSC held 11 security dialogues in 2022.

Facilitating the implementation of the **Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security**, the Belgian Chair held a security dialogue on the topic, focusing on International Humanitarian Law; Women, Peace and Security; as well as Private Military and Security Companies (PMSC). Unfortunately, due to the lack of consensus, the **eleventh Annual Discussion on the Implementation of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security** did not take place.

The topic of **International Humanitarian Law (IHL)** was discussed in two security dialogues and a joint FSC-PC. Under the Azerbaijan Chairpersonship, one security dialogue focused in particular on the protection of civilians. During the Belgian Chairpersonship, the Code of Conduct was examined from the perspective of IHL. Furthermore, a joint FSC-PC, also under the Belgian FSC Chair, focused on IHL from a more holistic view on the current state of affairs in the OSCE region.

The Belgium FSC Chairpersonship exercised a **cross-dimensional approach** by dedicating one security dialogue to the topic of **Children in Armed Conflict**, focusing on endeavors to initiate a pol-mil dialogue on the impact of armed conflict on children. Secondly, a security dialogue was

held on **Armed Forces and Environment**, including considerations for armed forces to reduce their impact on the environment by exploring relevant international frameworks and their implementation.

Under the Azerbaijan FSC Chair, one security dialogue was held on **Countering Terrorism** in all its forms and manifestations with a focus on the efforts of the international community utilizing the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security, which, *inter alia*, extends to the FSC's area of work.

In the field of **small arms and light weapons (SALW)**, the FSC supported and heard a report on SALW efforts at the UN 8<sup>th</sup> Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, States (BMS8) held in June 2022 in New York. Furthermore, the FSC adopted a decision on the Updated Best Practice Guide on Ammunition Marking, Registration and Record-keeping aimed at strengthening the efforts in developing policy guidance, operational guidelines and procedures on all aspects of ammunition marking, registration and record-keeping. Due to the unprecedented security situation, the work dedicated to the updating the Best Practice Guides on SALW and conventional ammunition was halted shortly thereafter.

While there was no agreement on holding the OSCE Biennial Meeting to Assess the Implementation of the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA. The Azerbaijani and the Belgian FSC Chairs nonetheless held security dialogues in this field, devoted to small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition and explosive hazards in the OSCE region respectively.

The work on the **OSCE's assistance projects on SALW and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA)** continued in 2022. The OSCE currently manages a portfolio of 20 assistance projects worth over 40 million euros addressing control of SALW and SCA. Several projects are aimed at ensuring the secure and safe management of stockpiles of SALW and SCA through infrastructure, material, equipment upgrades at storage sites, as well as chemical analysis laboratories for ammunition surveillance. Significant part of the projects is providing support to the efforts of combating illicit trafficking in SALW across the OSCE region. Extensive support is being provided to Central Asia in developing technical assistance projects countering the threat and risk of potential trafficking from Afghanistan, which include combatting trafficking of SALW. Recently, thanks to the great cooperation of the OSCE assistance requesting and assistance providing participating States, the remainder of the *mélange* rocket fuel component was removed from Kyrgyzstan, thus eliminating a major threat to human and environmental security. The SALW Portal, a new IT tool enabling better overview and greater transparency of the Portfolio of OSCE Practical Assistance Projects on SALW and SCA, was established this year providing more details about the progress of the projects.

Another topic addressed during the year was the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the **United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004)**. The OSCE has supported the Comprehensive Review of the Status of Implementation of UNSCR 1540 by providing an OSCE contribution towards the Review, initially in writing in 2021, and subsequently by a statement in June 2022 held at the United Nations in New York.

The FSC Chairpersonship of Belgium devoted a security dialogue to the topic of **gender** equality, touching upon the understanding of full, equal and meaningful participation of women within the politico-military security domain. Throughout the year, all FSC Chairpersonships supported the 2022 OSCE-UNODA Scholarship for Peace and Security training programme empowering young professionals, especially women, to engage meaningfully in policy-making, planning and implementation processes in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation in the OSCE area.

One security dialogue on **Post-conflict rehabilitation and Peace-building**: lessons learned in the OSCE region and the way ahead, was held under the Azerbaijan Chairmanship. It aimed to consider and give a further impetus to post-conflict rehabilitation as part of the Organization's conflict cycle toolbox, but also to explore ways for their further operationalization and enhancement.

The FSC Chairpersonships co-operated with the Polish OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office and the PC on cross-dimensional issues of relevance to both bodies in line with the OSCE's concept of comprehensive and indivisible security. To this end, **one joint meeting of the FSC and the PC** was held during the Belgium FSC Chairpersonship, on the topic of International Humanitarian Law.

In 2022, **military information exchange** continued on a high rate. Furthermore, a FSC decision on electronic military information exchange was adopted. The development of the OSCE Information Management and Reporting System (iMARS) reached an important milestone with provision of access to all participating States to take place before the end of the year.

In 2022, on average 27 % women and 73 % men participated in the FSC-related meetings (FSC Plenaries, AIAM).

In conclusion, over the past year the FSC continued to serve as an important platform for dialogue and decision-making in the first dimension, providing participating States with a forum to discuss politico-military security issues and raise security concerns. Despite a difficult climate, unprecedented security situation and geopolitical tensions, the FSC continued to prove its value by maintaining an important platform for discussion.