



FSC Chairmanship: Germany

**LETTER FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE FORUM FOR SECURITY
CO-OPERATION TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR EUROPE AND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA, CHAIRPERSON OF THE
TWENTY-SEVENTH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL OF THE OSCE**

As Chairperson of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), it is my pleasure to inform you about the Forum's activities in 2020.

In preparing this letter, I have consulted with the previous 2020 FSC Chairmanships, namely, Turkey and Ukraine. During 2020, the FSC Chairmanships worked in close co-operation to ensure continuity and efficiency in the implementation of the Forum's annual work programme.

Several initiatives undertaken by participating States led to the adoption of **six** decisions, all designed to support the implementation of existing commitments.

The year 2020 has been an extraordinary one on account of **COVID-19** and has tested the FSC's conduct of work. In their immediate responses to the crisis, the FSC Chairmanships, in close co-ordination with the Chairmanship of the Permanent Council and the OSCE Secretariat, have maintained continuity in the FSC's work while following the host country's preventive measures and prioritizing duty of care for personnel. By closely following the prevailing developments of the COVID-19 situation, the FSC Chairmanships provided guidance on modalities of the FSC's work. With the invaluable support of the OSCE Secretariat, the FSC meetings, those of the Working Groups, and the informal meetings were conducted either in a blended format or remotely via teleconference, starting from the Ukrainian FSC Chairmanship. While recalling politico-military commitments and their relevance in times of crisis, the FSC Chairmanships highlighted the need for solidarity and co-operation. The Turkish FSC Chairmanship issued a letter appealing to all participating States, within their sovereign rights, to refrain from or postpone verification activities under the auspices of the Vienna Document 2011 whenever possible, until it was determined that the prevailing conditions allowed such activities to take place safely again. In addition, the FSC Chairmanship invited the participating States to conduct the annual Global Exchange of Military Information electronically. Furthermore, the German FSC Chairmanship issued a letter inviting the participating States to accomplish the 2020 annual exchange of military information electronically via the OSCE Communications Network and outlined the procedures to achieve this fully electronic exchange of data.

The strategic discussions during the **security dialogues** indicated the FSC's importance as a platform for dialogue, addressing security issues of common interest and concern.

Although the topic regularly raised by Ukraine, involving active participation of interested delegations, continued to be dominant in the Forum's discussions, there were a variety of other active discussions on the following themes: normative and project-related aspects in the field of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA), including the topic of mine action; regional and subregional military and defence co-operation; the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda; the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, including private military and security companies; implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004); the Vienna Document 2011 and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs); matters related to terrorism; new technologies; and COVID-19 and its impact on politico-military aspects of security in the OSCE area, including the implementation of the CSBMs. In all, the three 2020 FSC Chairmanships organized a total of 21 security dialogues.

Three of the security dialogues and many informal meetings were devoted to **small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SALW/SCA)**, as tasked by the relevant OSCE documents and various relevant FSC and Ministerial Council decisions. Two of these featured discussions on OSCE work in mine action. Moreover, the dedicated work on updating the Best Practice Guides on SALW and conventional arms continued throughout the year and the **second OSCE Biennial Meeting to Assess the Implementation of the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA** – as decided at the 2017 Ministerial Council – was held under the German FSC Chairmanship in October 2020. The Biennial Meeting took stock of global actions and the new challenges and opportunities in combating illicit trafficking of SALW and conventional ammunition (CA). The participating States assessed the implementation of OSCE commitments on SALW and SCA and in their discussions focused on the options for improvement, in particular with regard to the review and update of the OSCE Best Practice Guides on SALW and CA and to the enhancement of the information exchanges and assistance mechanism.

Two security dialogues were held with a view to promoting **regional stability and adherence** to the principles and norms of the OSCE and international law. The one held under Ukraine's FSC Chairmanship concerned the security situation in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov region; the other one, held under the Chairmanship of Turkey, focused on regional security co-operation in countering irregular migration.

Another topic highlighted during the year was the **non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and United Nations Security Council resolution 1540**, to which one security dialogue was devoted under the FSC Chairmanship of Turkey and another under the Chairmanship of Ukraine, with the latter highlighting the FSC's contribution to the Comprehensive Review of the Status of Implementation of UNSCR 1540 and challenges to the non-proliferation regime.

During the FSC Chairmanship of Turkey, instead of sending – as would normally be the case under the FSC's Announcing and Reminding Mechanism – a reminder letter to the participating States that had not provided information pursuant to the Vienna Document, the Chairperson individually approached officials from these States in order to expedite the process.

The **30th Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting (AIAM)** took place in March 2020 during the FSC Chairmanship of Turkey. Led by Malta and Moldova, it provided an opportunity to raise and discuss various issues related to the present and future implementation of agreed confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs). The discussions at the AIAM resulted in a number of suggestions on how the current CSBMs could be implemented more effectively and

improved in the future. Among other things, new notification formats were discussed, with participating States putting forward concrete suggestions for improvement. Another instrument supporting and enhancing information exchanges between the participating States was the OSCE Information Management and Reporting System (iMARS) being developed by the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC), which has become even more relevant in the unexpected context of the COVID-19 pandemic. With its focus on improving the accuracy and availability of the relevant military data, iMARS is an excellent tool for increasing transparency and fostering fact-based discussions among the participating States in relation to arms control and CSBMs.

The **ninth Annual Discussion on the Implementation of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security** was held online in June 2020 under the Ukrainian FSC Chairmanship. The meeting provided a valuable opportunity for participating States to review the enforcement of the Code and to exchange views on ways of further improving its implementation, which resulted in valuable concrete suggestions on the way ahead.

The FSC also contributed to the 2020 **Annual Security Review Conference** within its mandate, providing inputs to relevant sessions focusing on politico-military elements, including challenges and opportunities related to conventional arms control and CSBMs.

The year 2020 marked the 20th anniversary of the landmark document **UNSCR 1325**. The FSC Chairmanships devoted a total of three security dialogues to gender equality. The German FSC Chairperson focused on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the OSCE area and the way ahead, underlining the need for education by highlighting the OSCE Scholarship for Peace and Security, while under the Turkish and Ukrainian FSC Chairmanships the discussions focused on various initiatives in the OSCE area and beyond.

2020 being a year of commemoration, Turkey dedicated one security dialogue to the **20th anniversary of the OSCE Istanbul Summit**, using it to look at the lessons of the Summit, described as a “bridge-builder to the 21st century”, and to discuss contributions to the agenda of the FSC.

All three FSC Chairmanships co-operated closely with the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office and the OSCE Permanent Council on cross-dimensional issues of relevance to both bodies in line with the OSCE’s concept of comprehensive and indivisible security. To this end, **four joint meetings of the Forum for Security Co-operation and Permanent Council** were held, on the Structured Dialogue, countering terrorism, UNSCR 1325, and hybrid threats and modern warfare.

To conclude, in 2020 the FSC has continued to serve as an important platform for dialogue and decisions, while at the same time providing participating States with a forum to discuss matters related to politico-military issues. Despite COVID-19, the FSC proved successful in taking measures to adapt to the current situation and keeping up with its regular work under the challenging circumstances.