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LETTER FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION TO THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION OF ITALY, CHAIRPERSON OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL OF THE OSCE

As the Chairperson of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), it is a pleasure for me to inform you about the activities of the Forum in 2018.

In preparing this letter, I have consulted with the previous 2018 FSC Chairmanships of Slovakia and Slovenia. During 2018, the Chairmanships worked in close co-operation with each other to ensure continuity and efficiency in the implementation of the Forum's annual work programme.

Even though the situation in and around Ukraine remained the dominant topic of the discussions in the FSC, several initiatives put forward by participating States led to the adoption of six **decisions**, which were designed to support the implementation of existing commitments.

The strategic discussions during the Security Dialogues emphasized the FSC's importance as a platform for dialogue and discussions addressing security issues of common interest and concern. Specifically, an active dialogue took place on matters related to topical European security issues, including, *inter alia*, confidence and security building measures (CSBMs), military transparency, security sector governance and reform (SSG/R), the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition, military doctrine, implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions 1540 (2004) and 1325 (2000) and sub-regional military and defence co-operation. All three 2018 FSC Chairmanships actively stimulated discussions by organizing a total of twenty-four Security Dialogues.

By continuing promoting **regional stability** and comprehensive and co-operative security, all three 2018 FSC Chairmanships dedicated security dialogues to sub-regional military defence co-operation, which geographically spanned the Visegrad Group, the Western Balkans, as well as the Nordic and Baltic Sea Region.

Under the chairmanship of Slovakia, the **28th Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting** took place in Vienna, between 27-28 February during which the participating States discussed the present and future implementation of agreed CSBMs. The issue of **CSBMs** was accorded specific attention during the tenure of the three 2018 FSC Chairmanships, in particular their decision to reinvigorate the discussions within FSC's **Working Group "A"**. Following this decision, delegations that have tabled Vienna Document Plus proposals have been invited to present their proposals and thereby re-opened an in-depth exchange of views among the participating States. Furthermore, Slovenia dedicated its chairmanship's first security dialogue to the topic of CSBMs and Arms Control. As an innovative form of a CSBM, Slovenia organized a special session of the FSC to commemorate the centenary of the end of World War I, which addressed the origins and consequences of one of the deadliest conflicts Europe has ever witnessed, with a view to possible lessons for the current security context.

Under the chairmanship of Slovenia, the Seventh Annual Discussion on the implementation of the **Code of Conduct** on Politico-Military Aspects of Security was held on 13 June, 2018, in Vienna. In the margins of the Annual Discussion, Slovenia organized a Code of Conduct side event, which included a national tables' fair, as well as a special panel discussion on the challenges presented by the phenomenon of Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs). To pave the way for next year's 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Code of Conduct, Sweden dedicated two security dialogues to the Code of Conduct, focusing on democratic control of armed forces and on rights and obligations of military personnel. In May, a regional seminar on the Code of Conduct was organized in Bucharest, Romania, and in November, a symposium on the Code of Conduct and its questionnaire was held in Berlin, Germany.

Throughout the year, significant efforts were made to promote gender mainstreaming and equality, increasing the number of female high-level guest speakers and integrating gender perspectives in the work of the FSC. During the 68th Joint Meeting of Forum for Security Co-operation and the Permanent Council on the topic of SSG/R, co-chaired by Slovakia and Italy in February, all speakers underlined the importance of including women to achieve an inclusive security sector under democratic control. Slovenia dedicated one security dialogue to Women, Peace and Security and was highly active in promoting the work of the OSCE MenEngage Network, including the launch of its webpage on 9 May. On 31 October, Sweden organized a special session of the FSC to commemorate the 18th anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325, which was followed by the release of the **OSCE Handbook "Gender in Military Operations: Guidance for military personnel working at the tactical level in Peace Support Operations"** and a panel discussion co-organized by Sweden and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on the role of military commanders in preventing sexual and gender based violence.

In accordance with the tasks assigned to the FSC in the Ministerial Council Decision No. 10/17 on **Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition (SALW/SCA)**, all three FSC Chairmanships conducted a range of activities related to these issues. A significant achievement in this area of work,

was the adoption of FSC Decision 1/18 on Best Practice Guide on “Deactivation of Small Arms and Light Weapons” (FSC.DEC/1/18/Corr. 2), during the Slovak chairmanship of the FSC. Slovakia also dedicated security dialogues to international projects in the field of SALW and SCA and launched the preparations of the OSCE’s contribution to the third UN Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects (RevCon3) held from 18 to 29 June 2018 in New York, while Slovenia addressed the importance of export controls and deactivation in countering the illicit spread of SALW, also in light of RevCon3. On 2-3 October, Sweden and the Conflict Prevention Centre hosted the Biennial Meeting to Assess the Implementation of the **OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA** in Vienna, which *inter alia*, included discussions on the implications of the RevCon3 outcomes on the OSCE’s work, the OSCE Plan of Action on SALW, the OSCE Handbooks of Best Practices on SALW and SCA and the OSCE assistance mechanism. Sweden also dedicated a security dialogue to the topic of countering trafficking of SALW in the Öresund region.

Another topic highlighted throughout the year was the issue of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and UNSCR 1540. Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden dedicated security dialogues to the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty Organization and its contribution to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, Nuclear Security in the OSCE area, as well as international co-operation as a tool for supporting the implementation of UNSCR 1540. All security dialogues were attended by high-level key-note speakers, which gives an indication of the interest among other international organizations to co-operate with the OSCE on this important issue.

The FSC contributed within its mandate to the **Annual Security Review Conference**, held from 26 to 28 June 2018 through sessions, focusing on politico-military elements, including conventional arms control and CSBMs.

All three FSC Chairmanships co-operated closely with the Italian OSCE Chairmanship and the Permanent Council (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, four **Joint Meetings of the FSC and PC** were held: one on SSG/R, two on the Structured Dialogue, and one on the Mediterranean and the security of the OSCE’s southern region.

In conclusion, the FSC has continued in 2018 to provide an important platform for dialogue and decisions, while at the same time providing participating States a forum to discuss matters related to arms control and CSBMs in general, and issues related to the Vienna Document in particular. The large number of proposals for Vienna Document Plus decisions indicates that many participating States recognize the need and call for a Vienna Document modernization. Therefore, it is important to continue the important efforts made in the Working Group “A”.