



EUROPEAN UNION

Forum for Security Cooperation Side Event:

“Value of Sub-regional Initiatives for Arms Control”

Vienna, 22 March 2023

EU Statement on “Regional Mechanisms for Building Trust”

1. Mr. Chair, the European Union and its Member States welcome the discussion on Regional Mechanisms for Building Trust and thank the FSC Chairpersonship of Bosnia and Herzegovina for putting this topic on the agenda of today’s meeting. We also thank the three panelists for their interesting contributions on this matter, reflecting their respective experience in the work of Benelux Arms Control Agency (BACA), RACVIAC and the Delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Subregional Consultative Commission (SRCC).
2. Mr Chair, your country has experienced the tragedy of war in recent history and the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been working hard to overcome this terrible legacy, including clearing mine fields, countering proliferation of small arms and light weapons and working towards reconciliation and a better future. We have welcomed your FSC security dialogues on mine action, SALW, Code of Conduct, as well as the joint FSC/PC meeting on the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. And we understand – in the light of your recent experiences - that you suggested “regional mechanisms for building trust” to figure on the agenda of your FSC Chairpersonship.
3. The creation of BACA by three EU member states proves that when participating States really want to work together, co-operation can even go as far as integration. The intervention has highlighted the benefits of collaboration while not ignoring the obstacles to overcome. BACA shows that a more in-depth collaboration is a way of enhancing transparency and can serve as a trust building measure.
4. It is always with great interest that we cordially welcome the chairpersons of the Sub-Regional Consultative Commission to the FSC, for a periodic presentation on

the state of play in Dayton Art. IV agreement arms control. For more than 25 years, arms control has been embedded in the overarching General Framework Agreement for Peace, in Annex 1 B, Art. IV and therefore has become an integral part of security policy for the region.

5. From 2014 onwards, the states parties themselves have assumed full ownership of Art. IV implementation. They managed to reduce heavy equipment and Armed forces personnel numbers to reasonable levels and thereby fostered the conditions for a lasting and sustainable peace. Recently, we marked the 70th meeting of the SRCC in Vienna. The SRCC meetings always mirror the continuous respectful and cooperative manner in which the four parties to the treaty ensure the implementation of the agreement.
6. Art. IV has been implemented in close cooperation with OSCE participating States. In this vein, let me also highlight and commend the OSCE Secretariat, in particular the Conflict Prevention Centre, which has been offering continued substantial support to the SRCC in all matters of organisation and treaty implementation.
7. Members of the contact group participate constructively in SRCC work. Similar to many other OSCE participating States they also deploy guest inspectors in the field who accompany verification teams of inspected and inspecting states parties. Verification measures are being conducted in full transparency and openness. This in itself is a confidence building measure amongst participating States. We welcome ongoing seminars and training on arms control and CSBM matters at the RACVIAC training centre, which is a renowned regional institute open for an ever growing number of interested countries' arms control personnel.
8. It is deplorable, however, that currently we see arms control and confidence building in dire straits in the wider OSCE area. Russia's unprovoked, illegal, and unjustified full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, supported by Belarusian authorities, has been raging for over a year now, resulting in immense human suffering. By launching this imperialistic war, Russia has trampled over the principles and commitments of the OSCE. We strongly condemn the Russian Federation's systematic violation of the arms control and CSBMs acquis in its entirety, and its refusal of initiatives for dialogue and cooperation. Thereby, Russia is seriously undermining the spirit of cooperation and confidence in this framework.

9. The ongoing Russian war of aggression against Ukraine with Belarusian authorities' complicity impedes trust and cooperation on an OSCE-wide level, notably in matters like arms control and CSBMs, for the foreseeable future. For Western Balkan countries, however, arms control continues to be a successful and promising formula for close and constructive cooperation.
10. We consider it important to state that this subregional arrangement has potential for the further strengthening and development of confidence building. It is the only arms control agreement to date which discusses a possible revision of procedures and the inclusion of modern arms technology in their Protocol Of Existing Types. This commitment was agreed upon by states parties last year during the XIII. Review Conference.
11. This said, Mr Chair, let me thank the panellists for their insightful presentations and express our hope that some day, arms control and confidence building will fully resume at OSCE level, provided that Russia stops its war of aggression against Ukraine, and that peace is re-established.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, the EFTA countries NORWAY, ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.