



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE 31st Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting Vienna, 2-3 March 2021

EU opening statement

The European Union and its Member States are pleased to participate in the 31st Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting. We thank the Chairmanship of Mongolia and Montenegro as well as the coordinators of the working sessions for the thorough preparation of the meeting.

We are deeply concerned that the security environment in Europe has deteriorated in recent years due to violations of international law and OSCE principles and commitments. In order to reverse this negative trend, we call on all participating States to fully respect their undertaken obligations and commitments. From our side, we are determined to contribute to efforts aimed at restoring trust and increasing mutual confidence among the participating States and, in particular, at enhancing reciprocal military transparency and predictability and reducing risk by updating the Vienna Document.

We welcome the steps already taken and encourage discussions on the measures proposed for improving present and future implementation of the Vienna Document and, in particular, enhancing military-to-military contacts among the participating States at the OSCE both in the High-Level Military Doctrine Seminar that took place last month and in the Structured Dialogue.

We also recall the proposals for updating the Vienna Document, including the Joint Proposal co-sponsored by 34 participating States, and encourage all participating States to engage in constructive discussions focused on the Vienna Document's role

in reducing the risks of conflict in the OSCE area by promoting transparency, predictability and stability. Furthermore, we recall the Joint Statement of 45 participating States at the Tirana Ministerial Council and reaffirm our strong commitment to the Vienna Document and its full implementation in letter and spirit, and are determined to support constructively the process of its modernisation with a view to achieving substantial progress toward updating the Vienna Document by the OSCE Ministerial Council 2021.

We firmly believe that the full implementation and further development of existing commitments in the pol-mil dimension is essential for enhancing military transparency and political stability in the OSCE area. We agree that Confidence and Security-Building Measures were never designed to solve conflicts; however, we believe that they certainly can reduce risk through increased transparency. The AIAM is an opportunity to discuss how the implementation of the Vienna Document can contribute to conflict prevention by increasing trust and transparency in the current challenging circumstances. We thus look forward to a constructive debate among delegations, aiming at improving our overall level of implementation of the Vienna Document and other Confidence and Security-Building Measures.

We thank the CPC for the documents that it has circulated in preparation of this meeting. We think they are a good basis for assessing the status of the implementation of the Vienna Document. In this vein, we also appreciate the work of the coordinators of the three sessions in producing food-for-thought papers that will help to drive the discussions, taking into account the experience of the drafters and the added value that they can provide to the implementation assessment.

We call on all participating States to engage actively and constructively in these important discussions to increase military transparency and reduce risks through a substantial update of the Vienna Document. We once again call on Russia to reconsider its political stance with regard to the Vienna Document modernisation.

We would also like to underline the valuable work undertaken in the IWG Structured Dialogue on the future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area. We want to recall the ministerial commitment of all participating States in Hamburg 2016 to work towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating conventional arms

control and Confidence and Security-Building Measures in Europe. We look forward to participating and contributing to the upcoming IWG Structured Dialogue meetings in 2021 and to cooperating with the appointed IWG Chair, Ambassador Luis Cuesta.

We consider that there is a need for the full resumption of the Vienna Document activities, as soon as public health situation allows it. In the framework of the Covid-19 pandemic, we managed to co-ordinate the suspension of these activities and will need to further collaborate to resume their implementation.

Madame Chair, we look forward to the discussions during the upcoming two days on the way ahead in this important task. We encourage all participating States to actively engage in this annual meeting as an opportunity to effectively voice the implementation issues they encounter.

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

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