EU Statement on “Conventional Arms Control and Confidence- and Security-Building Measures: challenges and opportunities”

The European Union (EU) and its Member States would like to thank the Italian and the Slovenian Chairmanships, as well as the key-note speakers, for this useful opportunity to discuss and assess the Conventional Arms Control and Confidence and Security-Building Measures challenges and opportunities in the OSCE area. Confidence and Security Building Measures and Conventional Arms Control are important pillars of our security community. We are discussing these at a time when the European security order, including principles of territorial integrity and inviolability of borders continue to be seriously challenged. In this regard we recall our position regarding the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

OSCE’s comprehensive and co-operative concept of security with emphasis on disarmament, Arms Control and Confidence and Security Building Measures, constitutes an important element of our common security. These fundamental and enduring commitments provide systemic and preventive means to enhance predictability and transparency thus reducing military risks and misperceptions, leading to a better understanding of threat perceptions and building trust among participating States.

Important agreements in this area, including the Vienna Document, the Open Skies Treaty, and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe have provided us with important security gains for many years. Despite the current difficulties with aspects of these instruments, we support efforts to restore and safeguard fully functioning, binding, sustainable and verifiable conventional arms control architecture, based on the norms and principles of indivisible and cooperative
security. We emphasize the need to work towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating Conventional Arms Control and CSBMs.

We remain committed to the full implementation of existing arms control and CSBM instruments, including the Vienna Document, the Open Skies Treaty and the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty. We support efforts to solve outstanding issues pertaining to the implementation of these instruments. We value the potential to discuss improved compliance, also within the Structured Dialogue. We reiterate our enduring support for the pending application of the Republic of Cyprus to accede to the Open Skies Treaty.

We continue to believe that it is vital to modernize our OSCE politico-military toolbox, most notably the Vienna Document, but also the arms control architecture as a whole, in order to increase military stability, transparency and predictability. We are convinced that this would bring more long-term security for all participating States. We welcome proposals on various Vienna Document chapters aimed at strengthening its provisions and adapting it to the current security environment, including Chapter III proposals on “Risk Reduction”. These are examples of efforts to dispel concerns and hence strengthen confidence between OSCE participating States. We recall in this context the proposals made by EU Member States on both para 16 and 17 of Chapter III, which a vast majority of participating States argues would reduce risks and tensions, and the French Proposal, co-sponsored by all EU Member States, on lowering thresholds for prior notification of certain military activities. We will continue to engage actively and constructively in these important discussions, as well as to use to the maximum extent the existing Vienna Document risk reduction framework. While voluntary briefings cannot replace compulsory transparency measures according to the Vienna Document, we see added value of voluntary briefings on military exercises below the Vienna Document thresholds. We encourage all pS to provide such briefings.

Finally, we remain committed to the full implementation in letter and spirit of existing commitments in the politico-military area and continue to support the substantial modernisation of the Vienna Document, as well as the further development of Conventional Arms Control, Confidence and Security Building Measures and other instruments in the politico-military area.
The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

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