

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation



DIALOGUE

TRANSPARENCY

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING

Who we are

The OSCE's 57 participating States have developed the world's most advanced regime of arms control, disarmament and confidence- and security-building measures. The Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) is the key OSCE platform that supports this work and where the States co-operate for greater openness and transparency to increase military security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian areas.

The FSC's work is focused on the OSCE's politico-military dimension of security. Its main objectives are to negotiate agreements on arms control, disarmament and confidence-building measures; to hold regular consultations and strengthen co-operation on matters related to security; to reduce the risk of conflicts; and to implement agreed measures.

The FSC also serves as a forum for information exchange and offers practical assistance to States, at their request, to prevent the proliferation of weapons.

In line with the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, the FSC's activities also complement the organization's work in the economic and environmental, and human dimensions.

History

The Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), the predecessor of the OSCE, was established in the 1970s to deal with risks deriving from inter-State rivalries and to reduce the risk of military confrontations during the Cold War.

The participating States agreed to base their security relations on co-operation and not to enhance their security at the expense of other States.

In 1992, the FSC was created as a decision-making body to consult on military security and stability in the OSCE area. Its mandate was expanded in 1994 and in the early 2000s, the FSC began designing and implementing projects on the ground.

Areas of work

Recognizing that today's threats are global, dynamic, and have multiple sources, the FSC works to address key issues in the politico-military dimension such as:



Preventing armed conflicts



Restoring trust and enhancing military predictability between States



Combating the illicit trafficking of weapons that fuels terrorism and organized crime



Improving the security of ammunition depots



Preventing the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons



Ensuring parliamentary control of armed forces and security forces



Promoting women's role in the security sector

How we work

The FSC is a decision-making body that brings together representatives of the 57 OSCE participating States every week. Its work is supported and operationalized by the OSCE Secretariat's FSC Support Section and OSCE missions in the field.

The Forum for Security Co-operation

Meeting in Vienna's Hofburg, the Forum for Security Co-operation provides a space for dialogue where political and military representatives of the 57 OSCE participating States raise and address their security concerns.

As a platform for military co-operation, the FSC is where confidence- and security-building measures are negotiated and where their implementation is reviewed.

The Forum is chaired on a rotating basis, with each State holding the Chairmanship for four months.

The FSC Chairmanship is separate from, but works closely with the OSCE-wide Chairmanship.

Decisions taken by the FSC are politically binding and taken by consensus to ensure that all participating States have an equal say in the decision-making process.

The FSC Support Section

The FSC Support Section is part of the Conflict Prevention Centre in the Vienna-based OSCE Secretariat. It provides advice and practical support to FSC Chairmanships and helps OSCE participating States with implementing their commitments in the politico-military dimension

through capacity-building, awareness-raising and technical assistance.

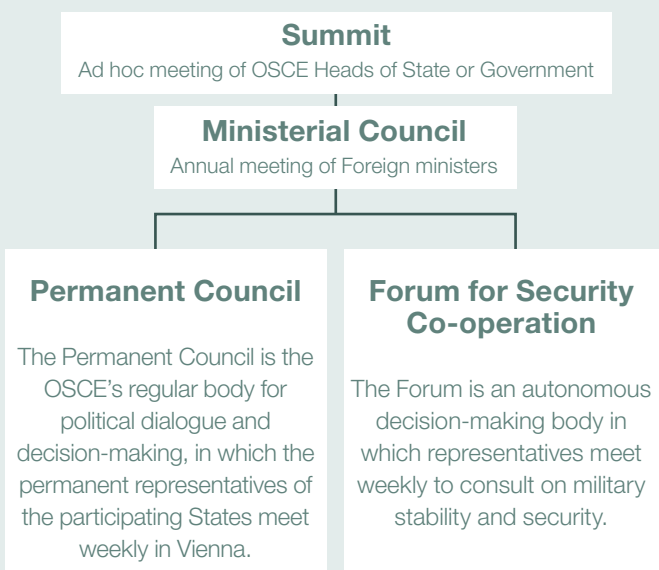
The FSC Support Section also serves as the depository of all military information exchanges among the participating States.

The OSCE Field Operations

The OSCE's field operations in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia often co-operate with national governments and the FSC Support Section to conduct on-the-ground assistance in areas such as demining, the control of small arms, the safe management of ammunition depots, and strengthening chemical and biological security.

The OSCE decision-making hierarchy

The FSC is an important decision-making body of the OSCE.



To learn more about the OSCE's decision-making structure, please consult the "What is the OSCE?" factsheet.



The FSC meets every Wednesday in Vienna's Hofburg and is chaired by an OSCE participating State on a rotating basis for a period of four months.

The Vienna Document

The Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs)

is a landmark and politically-binding document that promotes predictability and military stability among OSCE participating States through transparency and verification measures.

Since its inception in 1990, the Vienna Document has been a key component of the interlocking and mutually reinforcing web of arms control obligations and commitments that have lowered the risk of a major conflict in Europe.

The Vienna Document's CSBMs help States to understand each other's intentions in the military sphere, an area which would otherwise be a heavily guarded national secret.

Origins

The earliest CSBMs were established by the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 in the context of the East-West divide. Their purpose was to prevent a surprise attack and reduce the risk of conflict sparked by misunderstandings or miscalculations.

With the end of the Cold War, the CSBMs aimed at ensuring stability in

a Europe that was in transition and were used by the participating States to redefine their security relations on the basis of trust.

A new relevance

The Vienna Document is a 'living document' that is adapted by the participating States to meet their evolving security needs. It has been revised periodically and its current version was adopted in 2011.

With today's security environment in Europe characterized by a breakdown of trust between states and growing concern about the increasing frequency of military exercises and activities, the Vienna Document has found a new relevance.

Discussions on how it could be better implemented and modernized to reduce risks and meet the requirements of technological change are underway in the FSC.

The Vienna Document in practice

Under the Document's provisions, States are required, among other things, to:



Transparency

Provide each other with information about their military forces annually, including on manpower and major conventional weapon and equipment systems, as well as defence plans and budgets.

Notify each other ahead of time about major military activities such as exercises.



Verification

Accept up to three inspections per year and one visit to evaluate the provided military data. Some sensitive areas are excluded.

Invite other States to observe certain military activities.



Co-operation

Consult and co-operate in case of unusual military activity or increasing tensions.

Connecting States: The Communications Network

The Communications Network is a computer-based system set up by the FSC through which the participating States can transmit their treaty and agreement notifications in a secure and reliable manner.

The Network processes some 350,000 arms control-related notifications per year.

The Code of Conduct

The **OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security** is a rulebook for participating States to (a) guide their inter-State relations, and (b) to increase confidence in the armed and security forces and ensure the protection of their human rights by placing them under democratic control.

One of the main lessons from the conflicts in Europe in the early 1990s was that security forces operating beyond the rule of law place civilian populations at considerable risk, and

jeopardize regional and international security.

In 1994, the FSC adopted the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, which introduced

a new normative framework for the use of military power in a post-Cold War Europe. The Code also fosters the democratic governance over armed and security forces as an indispensable aspect of democratic societies.

The Code guides relations between States, but also contains the commitment to place their military forces and internal security services under civilian and parliamentary oversight, which was a significant innovation. In addition, the Code includes provisions under which States must protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all its forces personnel.

To provide transparency and reinforce confidence

in security forces, the OSCE participating States exchange information on their application of the Code's provisions annually. Some States also voluntarily provide information on private military and security companies and on the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Women, Peace and Security

The FSC supports OSCE participating States in implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security by sharing experiences and good practices in gender mainstreaming the security sector.



The OSCE Scholarship for Peace and Security is organized with the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs to train young women interested in careers in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament.



OSCE field operations help to build the capacities of local authorities to clear areas of dangerous land mines and to warn nearby communities of the risks.



Under the Vienna Document, a State invites other States to observe major military activities such as exercises. This contributes to transparency and builds trust.



The FSC has spearheaded efforts to rebuild confidence and dialogue in the military sphere in South-East Europe after the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Combating illicit arms and ammunition

The illicit use of **small arms and light weapons (SALW)** and unsecured **stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA)** pose serious threats to societies. The FSC works to mitigate these risks.

The accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms have contributed to the intensity and duration of the majority of recent armed conflicts. The illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms also jeopardize security in peacetime by undermining the rule of law, diminishing human

security and intensifying gender-based violence.

Unsecured or poorly managed stockpiles of ammunition and hazardous materials equally pose risks of illicit use, especially by terrorists and criminal groups. In addition, they can cause major casualties,

destruction of infrastructure and environmental disasters through accidental explosions.

In response to these risks, the OSCE participating States adopted the OSCE Documents on Small Arms and Light Weapons, and on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition.

They stipulate norms, principles and measures to regulate and manage the life cycle of SALW and ammunition, the production, transfer, storage, collection, and destruction of such weapons, and to control their export. In addition, the documents provide for information exchange between States, which contributes to confidence-building.

Best practice guides developed by the FSC help to implement the provisions of the documents and ensure that the same high standards are introduced in all the participating States. To reach those standards States can request the assistance of the FSC.

The scope of assistance can range from the disposal of surplus, obsolete and confiscated small arms and ammunition, and improving the safety of arms depots and storage facilities, to training and exchange programmes. Ultimately, all participating States benefit from such assistance because it improves the safety and security of the OSCE area and beyond.



Practical assistance on SALW and SCA

The FSC assists OSCE participating States, upon their request, with collecting and destroying SALW, helping to improve legislation to effectively control SALW, and assisting in improving the management of conventional ammunition stockpiles.

The OSCE has a proven and well-functioning mechanism for providing assistance to States as established by the OSCE documents on SALW and SCA. Both OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-

operation can submit official requests for OSCE assistance.

The scope of assistance includes controlling the cross-border trafficking of SALW, the destruction of

surplus SALW and SCA, physical security and stockpile management, and SALW collection programmes.

Participating States review the request and proceed with a needs assessment visit. The assessment report determines the scope of the assistance needed and provides recommendations for the project development and further implementation.

The assistance can be offered in the form of financial, technical or expert contributions provided by the participating States or donor organizations.

Every project proposal is evaluated by the OSCE Secretariat, before it

becomes open for donor contributions from States.

States also have the option to contribute funds to a 'Repository programme' for a certain activity, country/region or both. It is similar to a trust fund, but with more flexibility and control on behalf of the donor. It allows the possibility for long-term contributions, therefore saving time and improving cost efficiency for contributing States.

The OSCE practical assistance projects are managed, coordinated, implemented and evaluated by the FSC Support Section, and conducted on the ground mostly through the OSCE field operations. The OSCE annually implements between 10-20 SALW and SCA projects in a number of participating States.



The OSCE has supported States such as Ukraine in safely removing hundreds of tonnes of toxic rocket propellant components from their territories.



A new storage building was built in Tajikistan as part of the OSCE's support to the country in helping it to properly secure surplus stockpiles of ammunition.



Surplus, obsolete and confiscated small arms and light weapons were melted down and destroyed in Moldova as part of an OSCE project.



Field operations like the OSCE Mission to Skopje train law enforcement officers and work to enhance their technical means to prevent the illicit trafficking of weapons.

Non-proliferation

The OSCE participating States have committed to support international regimes of **non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons**. It is in this context that the FSC assists with the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540.

Concerns about terrorists and criminal organizations laying their hands on nuclear, chemical and biological weapons led in 2004 to the adoption of Resolution 1540 on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors.

Resolution 1540 requires all States to make sure that non-State actors cannot develop or gain access to dangerous weaponry. It is universal in scope and its application is mandatory.

In the OSCE area, the FSC supports participating States with the complex task of implementing the Resolution's more than 300 obligations.

A key aspect is supporting the development of National Action Plans to set priorities on the

basis of needs assessments and consultations among the many actors — from ministries to the industry — who have responsibilities in helping to achieve non-proliferation. Technical assistance projects in this area often contribute to the protection of the environment, for example, by improving chemical safety and security.

The OSCE also supports the revision of legislative and regulatory frameworks. It facilitates peer reviews through which States can see how others have enacted provisions of Resolution 1540 and learn from each other's practices.



The OSCE trains relevant authorities on the safe handling and management of chemicals that could be misused as potential ingredients for chemical weapons.



Through simulations, the OSCE facilitates the sharing of expertise on responding to and containing emergency situations that involve dangerous chemical substances.

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For more information about the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation, visit the website: osce.org/fsc

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