

## **Ministerial declaration by the foreign ministers of the like-minded group supporting a relaunch of conventional arms control in Europe**

25.11.2016

We, the Foreign Ministers of the Republic of Austria, the Kingdom of Belgium, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Republic of Finland, the French Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Italian Republic, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Norway, the Slovak Republic, the Kingdom of Spain, the Kingdom of Sweden and the Swiss Confederation, are deeply concerned about the continuing erosion of the rules-based European security order. In our part of the world, peace and stability, including the peaceful settlement of conflicts, have been guaranteed for decades by a reliable, rules-based order firmly grounded in well-established and non-negotiable principles of international law such as territorial integrity, sovereignty, inviolability of international borders, the right to neutrality and the free choice of alliances and one's own security policy, as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris.

Reiterating that security in Europe is indivisible, we reaffirm our commitment to these principles and express our concern that some of these principles are being violated. A number of worrying developments and actions over the last years, including the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the following and ongoing crisis in Eastern Ukraine, have raised serious doubts about the prospects of cooperative security on our continent.

In addition, the existing regimes of arms control are crumbling. The CFE Treaty, which led to the destruction of tens of thousands of heavy weapon systems in Europe in the years following 1990, is no longer being implemented by the Russian Federation. The Vienna Document is in need of substantial modernization and some provisions of the Open Skies Treaty are not being fully implemented. These regimes are mutually reinforcing and need to be strengthened.

Confronted with the increasingly unstable security situation in Europe, we see an urgent need to re-establish strategic stability, restraint, predictability and verifiable transparency and to reduce military risks.

We are convinced that a relaunch of conventional arms control is one important path towards a genuine and effective cooperative security allowing for peace and stability on our continent.

We are preparing for an in-depth and inclusive debate on the future of conventional arms control in Europe through an exploratory, structured dialogue. A central forum for such a dialogue is the OSCE.

We call upon all states that share responsibility for Europe's security to join our endeavor and to support a structured dialogue on conventional arms control in Europe. Working together, we can actively contribute to strengthening security for all on our continent.