



Time to create a reverse domino effect for confidence and trust in Europe

Statement by Dr. Andrej Benedejčič, Ambassador for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, at the 13th IWG Structured Dialogue in Capitals Format (Cluster I: The Lisbon Framework for Arms Control as Cornerstone of Euro-Atlantic Security), 17 June 2021

Mr. Chairperson,

In your invitation to this event and in your opening remarks, you called on all of us to contribute to a constructive dialogue by reflecting and sharing. In this spirit, I would like to recall that, three years ago, during the Slovenian Chairpersonship of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation, a security dialogue took place on the topic of CSBMs and arms control. The presenters, who were all members of the OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions, warned about the domino effect of collapsing pillars of arms control architecture in Europe. They underlined the need to step back from increasing confrontation, take a pause and then make two steps forward to rebuild mutual confidence and trust.

I think it is important to reflect on this appeal, in light of the events of the past three days; namely, the NATO Summit, the EU-US Summit and the US-Russia Summit. Let me especially highlight the NATO Declaration of June 14. It explicitly mentions this process, the Structured Dialogue process, and reaffirms the active support of NATO Allies at the highest level to the ongoing discussions at the OSCE. It mentions as well the Forum for Security Co-operation and expresses hope that intensified debates could lead to consensus on an updated Vienna Document at this year's Ministerial Meeting. The Declaration also reaffirms the commitment of NATO Allies to conventional arms control as a key element of Euro-Atlantic security.

In that sense, the recent developments represent the possibility for a breathing space that the expert community has called for. If so, it is up to us all to seize the opportunity by creating sufficient political will. A good start would be the acknowledgment that to maintain the Open Skies Treaty as a vital CSBM, it is essential that all of its State Parties fully implement its provisions. Another way forward would be to take steps to modernize finally the Vienna Document, this pillar of our collective security architecture. In addition to the existing proposals on the table, we could also think of deepening and widening the document further, for example, through its cyberization, by having it address cyber security issues as well.

These ideas might sound ambitious in the current environment, but let me recall that five years ago the then German OSCE Chairperson-in-Office concluded his call for a re-launch of arms control with the words: "It is time to try the impossible". This is precisely the spirit that is needed to recreate the "trends of cooperation, transparency and predictability" mentioned in the Lisbon Framework for Arms Control of 1996. In that sense, the motto of the Spanish Chairmanship of the Structured Dialogue, "Understanding for Security", is right on the spot. Finally, let me say that Slovenia, as the incoming Presidency of the Council of the EU, will also endeavor to contribute in its capacity to the promotion of dialogue in the Euro-Atlantic area.

Thank you.