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*Working Session II, 25 June: Arms control and confidence- and security-building*  
*measures: Challenges and opportunities*  
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Chairman-in-Office, Your Excellencies, officers, ladies and gentlemen,

During the last couple of years I have been privileged to work as a member of an expert commission discussing the way forward for the UK's independent nuclear deterrent. Our report will be published next week and I am not free to reveal what its conclusions will be. I believe I can, however, mention two very basic ideas that we found we shared from the start of work in our group and which – though hardly new – may also be important for the situation facing us in Europe today. First, to possess any powerful weapon is to possess also an exceptional responsibility for working on restraint in the use of arms. And this is not just a moral matter, since it has been said 'Those who live by the sword will die by the sword' - or in practical terms, the risk of destructive armed conflict is also a deadly risk to ourselves.

Secondly, one cannot make disarmament decisions, or allow them to be made by default, purely on financial or economic grounds. Anyone hoping in 2008 that the economic crash would lead to fewer destabilizing armed capacities, lower tensions, and less use of military force has surely been disillusioned by now. The truth is that economic hardship is more likely to fuel nationalist feelings, aggravate resource competition, and perhaps tempt governments to make shows of strength to distract from their citizens' other hardships. And changes in defence planning made under financial pressure also have a tendency to preserve the most destructive capacities, or encourage exploitation of the sharpest technological edges, while cutting manpower and less 'sexy' equipments that would often have had more flexible and more constructive uses. Of course, when one state or group of states also has to cut its defences further than others, the impact of continued higher expenditure elsewhere will also be particularly destabilizing.

So policy makers cannot safely leave the business of disarmament to finance ministers – to adapt a quotation from Professor Lawrence Freedman. They cannot and should not escape their responsibility for actively designing arms control and disarmament measures, and doing so first and foremost with a security rationale: the aim of greater security for all. But there are also economic implications, and it is not just a matter of taking whatever dividends flow directly from reductions. Destroying arms and armament capacities has costs of its own, and in my view disarmament is not complete unless that economic part of the challenge is met in a way that does not itself trigger new problems for security. I will return to this point later.

For the moment, Mr Chairman, these general considerations might be enough to remind us that serious dangers linked to weapons and force capacities still exist in today's OSCE space, and that in the light of the still ongoing economic crisis, efforts for confidence and security building, arms control and disarmament should be stepped up rather than slackening. But events themselves – as debated yesterday and this

morning - have brought us the same message from another direction. We have been reminded that rapid intervention capabilities, which were eagerly developed by the West in the last twenty years for applications outside Europe, can also be used to occupy territory on our own doorsteps. We have been reminded how other force movements can increase or reduce tensions and shift the range of possible scenarios in a crisis. We have seen that the availability and supply of weapons to violent non-state actors is not just something that gives us headaches in Afghanistan, or presents us with a tactical and moral choice in places like Syria. It is capable of swaying the fate of sovereign nations well inside the OSCE area as well.

Let us be frank: this last set of developments makes Euro-Atlantic arms control and the development of CSBMs harder, at the same time as underlining how badly we need them. It is true that arms control by definition is carried out with competitors or potential opponents rather than allies. But some minimum of mutual understanding and belief in the process is needed to convince both sides of the value of such agreements in the first place. Trust in commitments being honoured when the going gets rough is even more fragile, and may seem hard to sustain in the light of some recent actions. Besides, even for the best intentioned policy makers, avoiding, limiting and ending conflict itself is bound to come first at such times; weaponry issues are among the secondary ones that, at best, tend to be set aside for later.

Yet there is one big mistake we must avoid at all costs in such cases, and one big opportunity that may emerge if we recall the advice: 'Never waste a crisis'. The first point is that it would be totally self-defeating, for all sides concerned, to suggest that past agreements must be thrown on the scrap-heap or that the structures of pan-European cooperation, like OSCE itself, are 'dead' in the light of developments. This is as illogical as saying that the law against murder is discredited because of a frightening rise in killings at a particular time and place. The violation can be seen most clearly because it stands out from the normal pattern of behaviour; and what keeps that pattern normal and stable is the existence of rules and agreements that most people want to honour for most of the time. OSCE has played a unique role for nearly forty years in achieving such conditions in Europe, and it is perhaps exactly at times like this that its value, including its special features compared with other institutions, should stand out most clearly.

In our present case, for instance, most people would say the Vienna Document has proved its value even in 'bad weather' times by providing a basis for a military observer presence in Ukraine. Other flexible OSCE ideas such as the handling of 'unusual military movements' are relevant above all during times of high tension. And when the focus shifts to rebuilding and reform, the guidelines in OSCE's politico-military Code of Conduct can still help every single nation to have a defence that works better while also treating its soldiers and citizens better. Looking more widely, nothing has changed the need for the whole OSCE area to have common approaches to such common security dangers as proliferation, external or criminal cyber-attacks, the effects of climate change, and the next bird 'flu epidemic. Our challenge is to see whether and how peaceful cooperation can be restored in those areas where trust has been shattered: how to find a more common understanding of rights and wrongs so that we can re-assert and re-build on the fundamental OSCE principles that benefit us all, and so that we can raise better barriers against a reoccurrence in future.

It is here that the saying about not wasting a crisis comes in. There have been moments this year when many of us felt we were looking over a precipice into depths and dangers we hoped to have left far behind. Let us not waste the sobering effect that those feelings should have had on us. Putting it simply: if we have wondered about a Cold War returning, let us also remember the great achievements in arms control, disarmament and confidence building that brought that war to a peaceful, non-zero-sum end in the first place. I have argued here before that some of the dominant new trends in politico-military thinking during what I might call the age of intervention and of 'new threats', from the early 1990s onwards, have not only put us at risk of neglecting European security generally. They have brought unhelpful elements of ambiguity and confusion, or what I call asymmetries of doctrine, into key European strategic relationships. Now, if ever, is the time to frankly confront our recent past: to set aside what has failed, to avoid wasting energy on roads that are blocked, but to hang on to useful innovations, and to find our way together towards adapting old truths of war, peace and cooperation for the latest Euro-Atlantic reality.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I have spoken so far in general terms because I do not feel well placed or capable to suggest more specific solutions, for instance on force restraints, CSBMs, transparency, and regional arms control in old and new crisis areas. There are surely more than enough experts in this hall to develop, adapt and test such ideas if the political will is given. I am among those who would like to see a maximum of new thinking, more flexibility and perhaps more simplicity in the process. But I would like to end with a different line of thought, where I can offer more down-to-earth examples.

Despite well-known difficulties in some core areas of arms control, the politico-military side of OSCE has not been inactive in recent years. At last December's Ministerial meeting alone, decisions were adopted or endorsed on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Armaments – bringing policy up to date in the light of the UN Arms Trade Treaty among other things – and on Initial Confidence Building Measures in the field of Information and Communication Technologies. Further progress has been made in projects for controlled destruction of stockpiles and in defence conversion more generally.

Now, I suspect that many people still find it hard to bring actions and agreements of this kind within the definition of 'arms control'. Classic arms control and disarmament is supposed to be about constraining weapons in operational use, and its classic form was supposed to be the legally binding international treaty. But cutting combat arms holdings is a measure that takes effect at just one point in the complete life-cycle of weapons and destructive technology. Even when verified, it does not tell us where the arms came from, where they are going, or what the broader environmental, economic, social and political implications may be. We have seen in the past that if you insist on a state cutting its arms without considering how the costs and technological demands of that action will be met, there is a real risk of some discarded items ending up in conflict situations abroad. If you reduce demand for national arms in a nation with an arms industry, either it must boost its exports – affecting other people's security – or the collapse of an industry may cause destabilizing and debilitating internal effects. The classic disarmament treaty is silent about how to handle problems of this kind.

This is why I suggested earlier that economics belongs in our thinking about arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, even if it should not dictate the initial actions taken. And while few international bodies have wide enough competence to understand both politico-military and economic processes, the OSCE does and always has done. You can address here issues of the international arms trade, including the question of how well OSCE participating states are living up to their commitments under the Arms Trade Treaty and whether they might help each other in doing so. You can extend the philosophy and experience of CSBMs, one of OSCE's greatest inventions, to parts of the civil economy that are now realized to be security-relevant, such as cyberspace, and perhaps others that we have not imagined yet. You can work with states burdened by the legacy of conflict to clear away the debris of war and help build a cleaner, more cost-effective and democratic defence structure. You could perhaps go further in exploring the broader environmental impacts of defence activity and the possibilities of applying an ecological audit to military activities and defence industries as well. What may not always be easy to appreciate when you are working together here is that while some other institutions, including the European Union, can do some of these same things, nobody else can do *all* of them. And even some who could do them are less motivated to try, because they cannot see how they fit into the larger picture of security, stability and responsible government.

Mr Chairman, it may seem strange to insist so much on these common concerns of all OSCE participating states, and indeed of all OSCE partners, at a time when nations are gravely divided over an ongoing crisis. But I am making the point precisely because I see a risk that thinking about arms control - which should indeed be jolted by these events into a new seriousness - will focus too narrowly on the use of arms within or surrounding a conflict situation. We must of course do that, but we also need to keep the whole arms cycle within our view and ask ourselves also in that context what may have been going wrong. After all, conflict itself is never without economic and social contributing factors as well as economic, social and environmental impacts. OSCE's contribution to bringing our continent safely through these latest shocks will be greatest if it can succeed, not only in keeping the awareness of overarching and truly common security interests alive, but in bringing the insights from all three of its classic dimensions to bear on today's challenges. I am happy to note that such an ambition would also be very much in line with the goals of the Helsinki+40 process.

Thank you for your attention.