



**The Modernization of Disarmament:
A Common Cause for the OSCE and UNODA**

By

Angela Kane
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs



Joint Meeting of the Forum for Security Cooperation and the Permanent Council

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

Vienna, Austria

21 May 2014

I am very grateful for the opportunity to address this Joint Meeting of the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) and the Permanent Council—the two decision-making organs of the OSCE. I would also like to thank Ambassador Thomas Greminger, head of the Permanent Mission of Switzerland and Mr. Andrei Popov, Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Moldova for their kind letter of invitation on behalf of the OSCE.

I am delighted to join in this stimulating discussion under the auspices of the Swiss Chairmanship of the OSCE and the Moldovan Chairmanship of the Forum for Security Cooperation. And I am especially pleased that this meeting is focused on disarmament. The OSCE offers a superb forum for the consideration of a host of issues relating to disarmament and I strongly encourage it to undertake further work in this field in the years ahead.

With its roots as a “conference” on security and cooperation in Europe, the OSCE has certainly come a long way into being institutionalized into a viable and reliable Organization—one that has initiated confidence-building measures and promoted the norms of transparency, openness and trust that are crucial for ensuring effective cooperation amongst States. The OSCE is therefore not just a forum for negotiations but a forum for cooperation.

There are indeed some key facts that make the OSCE unique. For example, it takes a much-needed comprehensive and multi-pronged approach to security. Its focus includes but is by no means limited to the politico-military dimension of security, as it also addresses the economic, environmental, and the “human” dimension as well. The fact that the OSCE is the first regional security organisation to include a human dimension in its mandate indeed makes it unique. This is especially important given that interest in the humanitarian dimension of disarmament is rapidly growing among governments and civil society organizations throughout the world.

Another unique aspect, in my view, is the non-binding status of your constitutive charter. Participation in the OSCE and its Final Act represents and reflects a political commitment by the heads of governments of all signatories. Indeed, political will and commitment are keys for any successful negotiations, discussions and cooperation. I believe that the lack of this political will accounts for most—if not all—of the lack of progress in achieving multilateral disarmament goals.

We at the UN acknowledge the role of the OSCE in facilitating dialogue and cooperation amongst its participating States—for at the UN, peace and security are among our fundamental goals. Chapter VIII of the UN Charter clearly acknowledges the role of regional arrangements and agencies like yours as an appropriate forum for dealing with matters of international peace and security by engaging in activities that are consistent with the purposes and the principles of the United Nations.

Now, while the United Nations is of course not a regional organization and our membership is global, the UN and OSCE share many common goals. We are each working on conventional arms control, curbing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, preventing both the global proliferation and acquisition by non-State actors of weapons of mass destruction with the implementation of 1540, and of course providing a forum for dialogue by connecting participating States. I am convinced that in the future our common ground will also include the pursuit of the global prohibition and elimination of all nuclear

weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, for you have much to contribute in this region to this great global goal.

In the field of non-proliferation, the focus and work of the OSCE on implementing UNSC Resolution 1540 is very crucial as it has now become a key component of the current international security architecture. Fulfilling the responsibilities in that resolution is critical for the security of the States, their citizens and the international community as a whole.

To expand a bit on this theme of common ground, I would now like to shed some light on the work and role of the UNODA in this field. In support of the mandate of the 1540 Committee, the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) actively promotes international and national efforts to implement the resolution by focusing on three key areas, facilitating national implementation activities including through regionally coordinated approaches; strengthening cooperation between international and regional organizations; and building partnerships of key stakeholders including civil society, industry and academia.

Given this focus, UNODA is proud to count OSCE as one of its reliable and valuable partners. Through its exemplary work focussed on awareness-raising activities and tailored training, the OSCE as a regional partner has led the way in Europe in advancing the implementation of this resolution among its participating States, thus also setting an example globally. The extension of the 2011 Memorandum of Understanding on the joint implementation of projects to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction signed between the OSCE Secretariat and the United Nations is a good example of this.

Our collective efforts have focused on the preparation of voluntary national implementation action plans and on promoting regional cooperation. The UNODA and the OSCE have organized country-specific activities with several participating States,¹ some of whom have already adopted their national plans.²

A number of regional meetings to promote regionally coordinated approaches to the 1540 implementation have also been convened, such as 1540 workshop for OSCE participating States held in Kyiv last November. The UNODA has also recently launched new cooperative tools to promote the active implementation of this resolution, such as the 1540 Peer Review and the 1540 Effective Practices Platform. These initiatives have found active support from OSCE participating States, and two OSCE participating States—Croatia and Poland—have even concluded the first-ever 1540 Peer Review.

However, if I may also point out an important difference between you at the OSCE and us, at the UN our determined and committed focus is on disarmament, a goal also found in the UN Charter. Disarmament has been a core objective of the United Nations ever since the General Assembly adopted its first resolution in January 1946. We have approached our disarmament on two mutually reinforcing tracks—first, the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and second the regulation and limitation of conventional arms. Together, these goals are called “general and complete disarmament under effective international control”, a concept that the General Assembly has designated as

¹ This includes Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Uzbekistan.

² This includes Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

the UN's "ultimate objective" in this field.

With respect to conventional arms control, UNODA has a solid track record of cooperation with the secretariat of the OSCE's Forum for Security Cooperation. We both value highly the norm of transparency as a confidence-building measure, and we have been working to align our various transparency instruments dealing with conventional arms and small arms and light weapons. We are also now cooperating with OSCE on joint regional seminars on small arms tracing—one was recently held in Istanbul for Central Asian States.

We have long been impressed by the OSCE's work on military confidence-building measures, and recent developments in the region surely underscore their importance. The UN is increasingly being tasked to work on these issues. For some 30 years now, UN Member States have voluntarily reported to the UN their levels of military spending of the previous year. By making the figures publicly available in the annual UN Report on Military Expenditures, we have been encouraging the verification and analysis of these data.

Another useful confidence-building measure is the UN Register of Conventional Arms, which for the last two decades has been the world's authoritative repository of information on the global arms trade. I say "authoritative" because the data in this repository comes from governments not the private sector. We certainly share the conviction that is deeply held at the OSCE that enhanced transparency both on arms transfers and military expenditures serves a confidence-building function and could well help to prevent conflict.

Over the past 10 years, UNODA has also been requested by Member States to compile confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms from around the world. This has now grown into a collection of measures stemming from all continents, from which any group of countries in the world can choose to test what works best in their region. These include measures relating to information exchanges, observation and verification, and military constraints. The great variety of such measures underlines the importance of tailoring them to the particular security concerns of States within a region or sub-region.

Given the rich history of OSCE on military confidence-building measures, and our increasing cooperation, it would be excellent to explore how your organization and mine can further cooperate on developing such measures into the most useful and practical tools for fostering peace, security and stability. For instance, my Office stands ready to assist regional organizations in organizing seminars and workshops aimed at enhancing awareness of confidence-building measures in the conventional arms field and promoting the development of tailored regional and sub-regional regimes for such measures, where appropriate.

I would also like to take this opportunity to urge the OSCE to move a step further and strategically embrace the normative goal of disarmament. Some might think that the concept of norms is counter-intuitive to the concept of strategy. However, if one sees the elimination of nuclear weapons as a means to another end—that of preventing a nuclear war—then a world free of nuclear weapons is not just a normative goal. It also becomes a strategic goal for States in the international community.

With 57 participating States in the OSCE that collectively encompass three continents—North America, Europe and Asia—you also have among your membership four nuclear-weapon States and Europe is of course also covered by NATO's nuclear umbrella. Such credentials should not deter this Organization from addressing nuclear disarmament—

quite the contrary, the voice of the OSCE's on this issue will add only more legitimacy to your efforts in this direction and will resonate far away and much longer.

There is of course an inescapable logic in the assertion that if nuclear weapons did not exist, the potential for nuclear war could not exist. However, for norms to maintain their relevance, they require not just assertion but demonstration. And for this very reason along with the horrific humanitarian consequences of such weapons, we urge the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their obligations to move to a world free of nuclear weapons.

In this regard, the third and last session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference concluded at the UN earlier this month. Yet despite the positive atmosphere of that session and the expeditious handling of procedural matters, many substantive challenges remain for the 2015 Review Conference. The discussions on the implementation of the NPT's Article VI relating to nuclear disarmament were highly contentious. Indeed, the slow pace of nuclear disarmament remains one of the biggest threats to the NPT regime, by raising questions about what is increasingly looking like a double standard of compliance—with strict controls against proliferation, and something approximating *laissez faire* for disarmament.

Before concluding, I would like to note a phrase that appeared in my letter of invitation that I found most thought-provoking. It cited the “modernization of disarmament measures”. Whenever I see this term “modernization” at the UN I see it in the context of programmes to improve existing nuclear arsenals. A good case could be made, however, that many disarmament measures and institutions might well benefit from some modernization, as long as it does not alter our fundamental goals.

Many of our most basic norms in this field—including verification, transparency, and irreversibility—could be strengthened through technological advances and improvements in inter-governmental cooperation and information sharing. And as modernization proceeds in these areas, it will become easier to advance two additional disarmament norms—namely, achieving universal membership in the relevant treaties, and registering disarmament commitments in a legally binding form. Surely the OSCE and the UNODA share a strong common interest in promoting this type of modernization. It may well be the antidote we need to roll back the relentless march to modernize the arsenals.

I very much look forward to your future initiatives and continue to value your support in implementing key UN initiatives in your participating States and for your particular efforts and emphasis on the human dimension of security. For at the end of the day, despite the various flags or badges of different States that we see resting on the tables or which we carry, what will continue to bring us together and unite us at such forums is our common humanity.