

Keynote Speech by Ambassador Rolf Nickel,
Federal Government Commissioner for Disarmament and Arms Control held at the International
Workshop in Berlin, 2-3 July, 2013:

“The Future of Conventional Arms Control in Europe: Goals, Ways and Means”

**Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished guests,**

On behalf of the German government I would like to bid you all a warm welcome to Germany. We are honoured and delighted to host you here in Berlin and thank you all for coming to this Workshop.

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to Ambassador Heumann and the Federal Academy for Security Policy for hosting us in this great location.

I would also like to thank Dr. Wolfgang Zellner and his staff of the Center for OSCE Research for organizing the conference together with us. Dr. Zellner and his institute are long-standing and trusted partners of the German Foreign Office. In preparing this conference, they have done a great job again.

The strong response to our invitation encourages all of us to press on with our efforts to tackle the challenges Conventional Arms Control is facing and to carve out ideas for a future Conventional Arms Control Regime in Europe.

I specifically want to express my gratitude to the present OSCE chairmanship – Ukraine – for having initiated a general exchange of views on this topic in the Security Dialogue of the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation. The OSCE Secretary General dedicated the Security Days in March 2013 to contribute to this discussion. NATO member states have started a structured discussion in the HLTF. We have also benefitted from various national workshops and symposia that have already laid a good basis.

I also want to thank specifically all those who have taken up the responsibility to moderate or contribute to one of the panels at this Workshop.

There is no future without the past: The city of Berlin remains a symbol that peace and stability can be achieved if the right choices are made. And certainly with respect to Berlin and the unification of Europe and Germany the right choices were made. In just over one year, we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall – an event that has become symbolic of freedom and the end of the Cold War in Europe. Without the courage of the men and women from Budapest to Berlin, from Warsaw to Vilnius, to name just a few, we would not be where we are today. Arms control has played an important part in stabilizing and capitalizing on the revolutionary events of the time.

The merits of arms control in Europe – especially the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe – are well known. Greater transparency, limits on heavy equipment and enhanced cooperation between the armed forces played a major part in ending the arms build-up in Europe and in reducing military tensions in the turbulent years following the end of the Cold War.

In the light of these historic reminiscences, the question arises: Does Conventional Arms Control in Europe still matter today? And will it matter tomorrow? If so, how much?

Some of you have asked me this and other questions. So why are we holding this workshop? Why – in times of budgetary constraints – are we spending money on this issue rather than on something else?

In our view the issue must be addressed. Conventional Arms Control in Europe is in difficulties. The CFE Treaty is – at least partly - outdated and in need of modernizing.

We need a broad debate involving not only our closest allies, but also other important players in the Euro-Atlantic area. NATO has started a structural debate. We feel that others should be part of a broader, more general debate.

Academia and civil society can make significant contributions. Their input is therefore highly valuable. International organisations, in particular the OSCE, have a role to play.

What do we want to achieve?

This is a workshop, not a negotiating forum. It's an opportunity to discuss past experiences and fresh ideas. I encourage you all to be creative and as concrete as possible. There will not be a formal outcome document, but rather a Chair's summary disseminated to all participants. Our deliberations will be governed by Chatham House rules. Nothing will be attributed to individuals, individual states or individual organizations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me give you a German perspective.

As Minister Guido Westerwelle, recently reiterated: “Germany will continue to work in the interest of peace in the world with great vigour, with great energy, but above all with great perseverance on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation”.

Disarmament, arms control and confidence and security building are a priority of German foreign and security policy. They have been vital ingredients of a stable Euro-Atlantic security architecture, for most parts unprecedented in recent history.

We are proponents of a broad based approach. Nuclear arms control and conventional arms control go hand in hand. Progress on conventional arms control could also facilitate progress on nuclear disarmament in Europe and vice-versa.

Today, the risk of large-scale conventional attack has been virtually eliminated from European soil and a general feeling of security prevails throughout Europe.

This is not a celestial gift, but - amongst other factors - the result of effective disarmament and arms control, a process which began in the mid-seventies in Helsinki and culminated in the big arms control agreements, such as the treaties on INF, CFE, Open Skies as well as the Vienna Document some twenty years ago.

Today, Arms control and confidence building have lost nothing of their importance:

- Security challenges have not disappeared, they have changed. New challenges such as international terrorism or the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction etc. have emerged. They have serious repercussions on European security.
- All countries in the Euro-Atlantic area are confronted with these threats. They can most effectively be tackled in close cooperation with all parties on the basis of transparency, mutual trust and understanding.
- A stable and cooperative security architecture encompassing all of Europe, sets free energies for tackling the broader security challenges of the 21st century. A viable system of arms control and confidence and security building measures in Europe is an essential part of such a co-operative security architecture in Europe.
- The CFE Treaty occupies an important place within the European security architecture. A detailed exchange of information and on-site verification create predictability and transparency and thus strengthen mutual trust among all implementing states.

At the same time we need to recognize that for years the CFE Treaty has not been fully implemented. What is more, the Treaty does not fully address any more the fundamental

politico-military and geographic changes brought about since its signing in 1990. Important capabilities of today's armed forces are no longer covered by the Treaty. Many have argued for a long time, that the Treaty is outdated and needs to be modernized to better reflect today's realities. However, so far we have failed to achieve the urgently needed modernization. The Agreement on Adaptation of the CFE Treaty of 1999 has not entered into force; its ratification and implementation – whether in its original form or modernized – is out of reach.

What is more, we are witnessing with great concern that other pillars of arms control and confidence building are also badly affected: Efforts towards the substantial modernization of the Vienna Document are faltering; and even the implementation of the Open Skies Treaty seems to be grinding to a halt over political and administrative disputes.

By and large, we have observed that numerous efforts over the years to revitalize and strengthen the various regimes ended without results, fell short of our expectations or both.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The CFE Treaty has largely fulfilled its purpose: The capabilities for large-scale offensive military operations in Europe have been greatly reduced, if not eliminated. Those capabilities are unlikely to be restored in the near term, as militaries throughout Europe continue to downsize.

The concept of “balance” which has been the basis for the limitation regime of the CFE Treaty has become obsolete with the end of block-to-block confrontation.

However, we are still a far cry from a Europe free of perceived threats and regional conflicts: A number of states still perceive dividing lines and different levels of security. We observe a growing diversity of risks, threats and threat perceptions in Europe, especially at sub-regional levels.

We need to re-establish a common understanding of the relevance of Conventional Arms Control in today's European security environment. While the need has been widely recognized we have yet to work on creating common ground.

The fundamental and guiding questions are:

- What are the security concerns in Europe?
- What are the goals that we want to achieve with Conventional Arms Control in Europe?
- Which modernized regime of Conventional Arms Control could best address those concerns?

Our Workshop hopefully serves to stimulate our discussions and to find answers to these questions.

Today's major security challenge in Europe derives from a lack of confidence regarding neighbours' intentions. Add to that specific concerns stemming from sub-regions of fragile security. And there is the fear of localized military tensions or localized offensive operations.

Furthermore, the development of new weaponries has become a source of growing concern. There is no clear picture yet of the scope and role of new weapons systems in future defence and security systems.

Modern Conventional Arms Control and Confidence Building needs to properly address these concerns.

We advocate to take a step back and concentrate first on a common understanding of the relevance and goals of future Conventional Arms Control. Only when we have achieved that we can discuss ways and means how to reach our goals.

We consider it possible to advance a common understanding of the scope and goals of a future Conventional Arms Control regime. From a German perspective, the future regime should serve the following goals:

- We all are committed to a *co-operative Euro-Atlantic security architecture* based on OSCE principles and characterized by the indivisibility of security.
- The lack of military transparency can lead to misperceptions of national intentions. Conventional Arms Control in Europe must enhance predictability and contribute to security, stability and mutual trust by *reducing threat perceptions*.
- In order to allow us to concentrate our efforts on new and often global security challenges, we need *increased predictability and transparency in Europe*. This is of particular interest in times of reduced military resources.
- There are still zones in Europe which – from a security point of view – are more sensitive than others. Regionally tailored measures and agreements might therefore be necessary to contribute to *enhanced sub-regional security*.

In short: A future Conventional Arms Control agreement must – most of all – enhance transparency and strengthen predictability in order to improve confidence and security for all participating States.

But there are even wider implications: At the Euro-Atlantic level, progress on Conventional Arms Control in Europe could also facilitate progress on nuclear disarmament, because nuclear disarmament and Conventional Arms Control in Europe are linked.

As you know, Germany supports further arms control steps towards the “Global Zero” objective that include sub-strategic nuclear weapons.

When we discuss which modernized Conventional Arms Control regime in today's security environment in Europe can best serve the aforementioned goals we need to focus on two major issues:

- How to address the strategic security situation at the European level: Here we clearly observe an increased cooperation beyond former block borders and a changed military reality characterized by crisis prevention and out-of-area missions conducted by fundamentally transformed armed forces.
- How to address sub-regional security: Perhaps more tricky, as we still observe patterns of confrontation, imminent conventional threats and mistrust.

With regard to the strategic security situation at the European level, unprecedented reductions of conventional armed forces in most European countries suggest that numerical limitations have less significance for security in Europe nowadays.

In addition, armed forces today are more determined by quality than by quantity. More than ever, countries base their risk assessments and threat perceptions on capabilities of other armed forces, to a lesser degree on sheer numbers.

A modern Conventional Arms Control architecture should therefore focus on military capabilities with special regard to qualitative aspects. And this is where we encounter the next challenge: Capabilities – and here all experts will agree – are very hard to assess. What can we do about that?

We regard verifiable transparency as the appropriate means on the way to a proper assessment of capabilities. Hence, we deem it essential to develop instruments that provide the necessary additional information to assess capabilities and that allow for appropriate verification.

There is no concept yet but some ideas, how these instruments could look like. We look forward to a thought-provoking discussion on this issue.

Turning to the second point I made – regarding sub-regional security: This is perhaps one of the most challenging subjects, and answers will not come easy.

We think that a future Conventional Arms Control regime should provide instruments that are tailored to the sub-regional needs.

Today, there are zones of different security in the area of application of the existing regime. A modernized Conventional Arms Control regime must contribute to minimizing these differences in the future.

The different sub-regions are affected by a wide range of very different security challenges: In some sub-regions we observe:

- substantial holdings of conventional armaments and equipment,
- destabilizing concentrations of forces in border areas and
- the issue of “grey areas” including the presence of forces, armaments and equipment that are not covered by existing arms control arrangements.

While we can imagine a variety of measures to include conflict regions into arms control regimes we are fully aware that arms control measures cannot solve conflicts, disputes or questions of status.

Therefore, we have to think about status-neutral arms control solutions. This would not mean to perpetuate a dissatisfactory status quo or even accept it. But arms control can enhance security and support political solutions. We are particularly interested in the views of parties concerned of how these issues could be tackled.

Distinguished guests,

We have a very demanding and challenging task ahead of us. With commitment and political will we can achieve progress.

We strongly believe that a modernized and functioning Conventional Arms Control regime is an essential investment in the future stability and security in Europe.

I'm looking forward to a lively debate and constructive discussions over the next day and a half. I wish this Workshop success and concrete results.

Thank you all once again for your attendance.

Willkommen in Berlin !