



ENGLISH only

in co-operation with



Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
of the Czech Republic



## COUNTERING FRAGMENTATION AND POLARIZATION: RE-CREATING A CLIMATE FOR STABILITY IN EUROPE

Prague, 18-19 May 2017

### Concept Note

#### Rationale

The international security environment is marked by growing divisions and uncertainty unprecedented for decades. The norms and principles underpinning the international order are contested. There are signs that the open global economic system might be unravelling and protectionism may return. Multilateralism seems to be in retreat, with its key institutions being questioned and at risk of being weakened. A result could be a more fragmented and polarized multipolar world.

The situation in Europe follows these global trends. The continuing crisis in and around Ukraine has put pillars of the European post-war security order into question and renewed geopolitical confrontation on the continent. Populist, nationalist and xenophobic movements are on the rise in many countries, challenging fundamental OSCE values and norms and undermining efforts to create a common security space in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region. Deteriorating military predictability and trust, terrorism, growing threats in the cyber domain, continuing flows of refugees and migrants to Europe's shores and a volatile economic situation in some European countries only exacerbate these risks. Upcoming elections in several key countries later this year may fundamentally change the political landscape of Europe with far-reaching long-term consequences.



Against this backdrop, Europe and the world are facing security challenges of increasing complexity and interconnectedness that cannot be solved without mutual co-operation and joint action. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), as the world's largest regional security organization, plays a crucial role in these efforts. Discussions at the OSCE Security Days conference in Berlin in June 2016 highlighted a growing realization that despite mutual divisions and differences, current challenges to European as well as global security require co-operation and the OSCE participating States should seek a convergence of interests whenever possible. While growing uncertainty and fragmentation, which have only accelerated in recent months, make such efforts increasingly difficult, the only way to move forward is by continuing to find areas for engagement. At the OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting in Hamburg in December 2016, the OSCE participating States launched a process of structured dialogue on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area that should serve as a basis for a way forward. Although rebuilding trust and restoring co-operative security in the OSCE area appear extremely difficult in the short term, there is no alternative but to reengage in constructive dialogue and pragmatic co-operation in order to preserve and safeguard the fundamental pillars of a stable and peaceful security environment in Europe.

## Objectives and expected outcomes

This OSCE Security Days event aims to contribute to a dialogue on how to create a stable and resilient security environment in Europe at a time of growing global uncertainty and unpredictability. It will allow for a discussion of key challenges and trends in the development of the security environment in the OSCE area and their implications for regional security and stability. The event is expected to generate concrete ideas and recommendations for countering increasing fragmentation and polarization of the security environment in Europe, returning to constructive dialogue and pragmatic co-operation, and strengthening trust and confidence among the OSCE participating States. It will complement ongoing discussions within the OSCE and its outcomes will feed into these processes, including the Informal working group on structured dialogue on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area.

## Format

The event is organized in co-operation with the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic** and the **Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung**. Speakers will include senior officials from governments and international organizations, prominent members of civil society and the private sector, and leading experts from academia and the media. The event will begin with an **opening session on 18 May 2017** and continue with a **full-day conference on 19 May 2017**. It will be open to public (prior registration mandatory) and conducted in English. Journalists are welcome to attend.



## About the OSCE

With 57 participating States in Europe, Central Asia and North America, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is the world's largest regional security organization. Its mission is rooted in the principles and commitments contained in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, a pioneering document that contributed to the end of the Cold War. The OSCE has a comprehensive approach to security that encompasses politico-military, economic and environmental, and human aspects and that is reflected throughout the work of the Organization.

## About OSCE Security Days

OSCE Security Days have served as a unique platform for enhancing the security dialogue in the OSCE area since the initiative was launched in 2012. Security Days events aim to deepen understanding of common security challenges and generate possible solutions by stimulating informal, interactive and forward-looking debate among prominent experts from international organizations, governments, think tanks, academia, civil society, youth, and the media. Previous Security Days have focused on topics such as migration, climate change, radicalization and violent extremism, conventional arms control, water security, and the women, peace and security agenda.

