

*Dear Ministers, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my great pleasure to address you today. First and foremost, I would like to sincerely thank the Federal Foreign Office of Germany and my colleague Heiko Mass for organizing this conference. It could not have come at a better moment as discussing this topic is more important than ever for plenty of reasons.

Let us face the facts: arms control framework, both in its conventional as well as in its nuclear dimension, is in deep crises. That threatens our world to become more unpredictable and less stable. Furthermore, the advent of new technologies and advances in the field of warfare makes past approaches to arms control to a certain extent obsolete. For these reasons, we urgently need to address this issue and redouble our effort in finding ways how to make arms control more relevant and up to date. At the same time, we need to acknowledge that efficiency of arms control itself is impacted by a number of factors. While it presents a unique instrument to promote peace and stability, arms control alone cannot solve fundamental political and security issues.

Decline of arms control regimes is not a new phenomenon. We observe this trend ever since Russia withdrew from the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe in 2007. The erosion of arms control further accelerated with demise of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2018 and most recently with the US withdrawal from the Open Skies in 2020. The destiny of the New START treaty hangs by a thread.

It is true that arms control regimes, which mostly originate in 1980s and 1990s, are becoming increasingly obsolete for two main reasons. Firstly, fundamental change has occurred in global geopolitics and power structure in the past 40 years. The Soviet Union is long gone and with its demise also the bipolarity epitomized by two super powers. China is rising both economically and militarily and so is its assertiveness and influence on world affairs. Hence, arms control regimes constructed to operate in the bipolar Cold War world are losing some of its relevance. Secondly, those regimes were negotiated long before the advent of new technologies. Those represent both challenge as well as opportunity. In terms of challenges, we witness new weapon systems and associated doctrines create unforeseen strategic challenges. Long-range precision guided weapons; advanced long-range air defense systems as well as electronic warfare units reshape modern battle space. In Europe we need to be concerned with what many analysts call anti-access/area denial tactics, which threatens to isolate vast geographic areas and significantly hamper NATO's effective response in case of conflict. This strategy might bear significant political implications as it undermines NATO's ability to fulfill its core task of collective defense. Any future arms control regime thus has to address these new weapon technologies to maintain stability on the European continent.

Technological advancements also significantly influence nuclear arms control. Hypersonic weapons and other new forms of delivery systems represent a fundamental shift, which must be integrated into any future arms control framework. From the European perspective, we need to take special precautions as regards the so-called non-strategic nuclear weapons. The threat posed by these weapons is especially salient in Europe as these could be used primarily on our soil. Furthermore, the end of INF treaty means that diverse types of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems are left without any regulatory frameworks. As a result, we in Europe are bound to face the dilemmas, of which we have been spared for thirty years, when INF treaty was in force. However, if we are successful in addressing this challenge and restoring some control over non-strategic nuclear weapons, possible openings in the field of conventional arms control may follow in similar fashion in which the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty built on the success of the INF Treaty in late 1980s.

In this context, modern technologies provide us also with an opportunity. The advent of unmanned aerial vehicles, artificial intelligence and big data collection can become very flexible and effective tool for arms control. We often see these technologies in terms of their disruptive potential and as a destabilizing factor. Although this aspect must not be underestimated, it is also true that modern technologies might allow us to collect unprecedented amount of information. And that would open for us far reaching opportunities in terms of assessing compliance of parties with future arms control mechanisms commitments. Europe should spearhead efforts in this area and develop new ideas on how to leverage new technologies in order to build a technological base for future arms control regimes. *“Trust, but verify”* is the motto of the arms control. If we do our homework on the latter part of this statement and improve our means to verify compliance, trust will be a much easier goal to achieve.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We must not misread our current situation and lessons of history. The effective arms control was born out of unprecedented historic conditions, which had its roots in major policy shift and understanding of the need to regulate and manage Cold War confrontation. Unfortunately, today's conditions are not the same and the situation does not seem to be ripe for another major breakthrough in the field of arms control. As we gather here today, a number of conflicts in Europe are either in their active phase or turned into frozen conflicts that remain fundamentally unresolved. Both EU and NATO have their unity and resolve tested almost on a daily basis by revisionist powers, both those on our borders and those further away. Discussion about arms control cannot be separated from a careful analysis of existing political reality and associated considerations. A prerequisite for this discussion to have any meaningful outcome is to maintain European and Euro-Atlantic unity. For this unity supports deterrence and balance of power and as such it represents a precondition for successful arms control and more peaceful future. In this sense, embracing new technologies may equip us with the means

ready to match our needs. If we succeed in those tasks, we also significantly increase our chances of restoring a more stable world in the near future.

*Thank you for your attention.*