

# IMPLEMENTING UNSCR 1540: THE OSCE'S ROLE IN FACILITATING PEER REVIEW MEETINGS\*



*Representatives of relevant ministries and other state agencies from Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan discuss progress on implementing provisions of UNSCR 1540, Minsk, 2 August 2016. Photo credit: MFA of Belarus/Alexandra Skoda*

## ABSTRACT

**This article underscores the significance of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) (UNSCR 1540), a pivotal UN resolution aimed at curbing the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). It highlights the supportive role played by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in ensuring its effective execution through productive peer review gatherings, collaborative endeavours involving numerous OSCE participating States. The article emphasizes the importance of regional collaboration and legislative improvements, particularly in areas such as export controls and biosecurity. By stressing the importance of OSCE-led peer reviews in facilitating the exchange of knowledge and best practices, the article underscores the reviews' vital contribution to advancing global efforts in non-proliferation.**

\* The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the OSCE.



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## INTRODUCTION

On 28 April this year, the world marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) (UNSCR 1540)<sup>1</sup>. Adopted two decades ago, UNSCR 1540 represents a cornerstone in efforts by United Nations Member States to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The resolution estab-

lished binding obligations for all States aimed at preventing and deterring non-State actors from obtaining access to such weapons and related materials. Moreover, it required all UN Member States to adopt and enforce measures to prevent the acquisition and transfer of WMDs and their means of delivery by non-State actors.

In 2011, the UN Security Council passed UNSCR 1977,

which reaffirmed UNSCR 1540 and further emphasized cooperation with international, regional, and sub-regional organizations.

At the regional level, the participating States of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) called upon all participating States to fully implement UNSCR 1540 by adopting a decision in the Forum for Security Co-op-

<sup>1</sup> [Microsoft Word - 0432843E.doc \(un.org\)](#)

eration (FSC)<sup>2</sup> supporting its effective implementation.<sup>3</sup> The OSCE recalled States' commitments in this regard, in particular, the OSCE Principles Governing Non-Proliferation adopted in 1994<sup>4</sup> and updated in 2013.<sup>5</sup> In 2009, the Ministerial Council<sup>6</sup> tasked the FSC to facilitate the fulfilment of UNSCR 1540 provisions by the OSCE participating States.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, by adopting the 2009 Ministerial Council Declaration on Non-Proliferation, the participating States also pledged to facilitate implementation of the resolution by providing effective assistance to States that require it.<sup>8</sup>

In the Vilnius Ministerial Council Decision from 2011, the OSCE participating States expressed their support for maintaining the on-going activities supporting the implementation of UNSCR 1540, such as information sharing on national progress and lessons learned. In addition, the FSC was tasked to continue to identify and strengthen, as

and when appropriate, specific ways the OSCE could assist participating States, upon their requests, in the further implementation of UNSCR 1540, in close coordination with the 1540 Committee, to complement its efforts. And lastly, in 2015, the FSC adopted a Decision on "OSCE's Role in Support of UNSCR 1540 (2004)", which clearly outlined a role for the OSCE Secretariat at Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) in this regard.

## THE ROLE OF THE OSCE

The OSCE, with its 57 participating States, has a comprehensive approach to security, which encompasses politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions. This approach uniquely positions it to support the implementation of UNSCR 1540. The OSCE's main activities in support of UNSCR 1540 are twofold: firstly, supporting national efforts in the implementation of UNSCR 1540. This includes various ca-

capacity-building and awareness raising activities, as well as assistance with developing voluntary national action plans (NAP) and strengthening legislation. Secondly, the OSCE promotes regional co-operation on the implementation of UNSCR 1540. Through organizing various regional events, the OSCE aims to foster close collaboration among States to address transboundary proliferation issues.

## OSCE-SUPPORTED PEER REVIEW MEETINGS

The OSCE is a platform for dialogue and cooperation on security, and its significant efforts in support of participating States include peer review meetings. These meetings are designed to foster mutual learning and support among States in their implementation of UNSCR 1540, and allow participating States to share experiences, best practices, and challenges in a constructive and cooperative environment. The process typically

<sup>2</sup> [Forum for Security Co-operation | OSCE](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Microsoft Word - fscej474.doc \(osce.org\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [NON-PROE.PDF \(osce.org\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [FSC.DEC/7/13 \(osce.org\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Ministerial Councils | OSCE](#)

<sup>7</sup> [MC.DEC/16/09 \(osce.org\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [MC.DOC/5/09 \(osce.org\)](#)

involves a reviewing State or States visiting the host country to assess its UNSCR 1540 implementation efforts, followed by recommendations and the sharing of expertise. Most importantly, these meetings are based on the principles of trust, openness and cooperation between participating States, which is crucial in the contemporary landscape of global security.

These peer reviews have proven to be highly effective. For example, a series of meetings between Central Asian States facilitated by the OSCE resulted in enhanced inter-agency cooperation and the development of NAPs for several participating States, as well as involvement of other OSCE countries such as Belarus and Mongolia. Such outcomes underscore the value of peer reviews in identifying gaps, fostering regional collaboration and building trust among States in implementing UNSCR 1540.

### SETTING THE SCENE

From 16 to 18 December 2014, representatives from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan met in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan to discuss the status of implementation, exchange best practices and improve their cooperation when implementing UNSCR 1540. The meeting resulted in the two countries conducting peer review visits to each respective country. Belarus was later invited to the peer review exercise, thus expanding the format from being bilateral to trilateral.

### PEER REVIEW MEETING BETWEEN BELARUS, KYRGYZSTAN AND TAJIKISTAN IN MINSK

The peer review discussions in Minsk, from 2 to 5 August 2016, focused on sharing experiences in implementing UNSCR 1540, as well as legislative and regulatory measures related to non-proliferation. They also covered practical exchanges

on export control, biosecurity, and border controls, in alignment with UNSCR 1540. The trilateral peer review aimed to develop practical recommendations and draft documents to support the NAPs of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, focusing on normative, legislative, practical, and technical aspects of UNSCR 1540. The meeting was the second event to be held in the OSCE region and in the world, and the first to be held in trilateral format.<sup>9</sup>

### PEER REVIEW MEETING BETWEEN BELARUS, KYRGYZSTAN AND TAJIKISTAN IN DUSHANBE

From 2 to 4 August 2017, a follow-up peer review meeting was held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The three-day discussion was based on the recommendations from the August 2016 Minsk meeting and further focused on the national approaches to implementing the relevant operative paragraphs of UNSCR 1540.<sup>10</sup>

9 [Representatives of Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan discuss implementing UNSCR 1540 at OSCE-supported meeting in Minsk | OSCE](#)

10 [UNODA-OSCE Project "Support of Regional Implementation of UNSCR 1540": Peer-Review Meeting in Tajikistan - UNODA \(unrcpd.org\)](#)



Participants of Dushanbe round of peer review meeting on UNSCR 1540, Dushanbe, 2 August 2017.  
Photo credit: OSCE

This included areas such as policymaking, legislative framework development, enforcement procedures, and effective practices outlined in the 1540 NAPs of the three States.

Furthermore, delegations extensively discussed export control issues, including national control lists and licensing systems, as well as relevant border control measures and the identifica-

tion of dual-use goods. They also looked at chemical and biological security issues, including the exchange of experiences and legal documents that could help improve national legislation and the regulatory frameworks of the participating States. Finally, participants had an opportunity to learn about practical implementation measures from Tajikistan through site visits to relevant facilities.

### PEER REVIEW MEETING IN 5+1 FORMAT: CENTRAL ASIA + BELARUS IN ISSYK-KUL

From 28 to 30 June 2018, Kyrgyzstan hosted a peer review meeting in Issyk-Kul, that included Belarus and Central Asian countries, in a six-party format for the first time.<sup>11</sup>

During the meeting, an idea to develop a “regional plan to

<sup>11</sup> [OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek supports Central Asian States and Belarus in joint efforts to strengthen implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 | OSCE](#)



Security Council hears briefing by Chair of OSCE; Credit: UN Photo/Evan Schneider

promote implementation of UNSCR 1540” was discussed. It was suggested that such a regional plan would include both actual recommendations of past peer review meetings and new measures. Parties also discussed topics related to implementing the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and strengthening national export control systems and improving cooperation in this field.

### **PEER REVIEW MEETING IN 5+1 FORMAT: CENTRAL ASIA + MONGOLIA IN ISTANBUL**

The peer review meeting in Istanbul from 8 to 10 November 2022 was initiated by Kyrgyzstan and organized with the support of the OSCE.<sup>12</sup> Following fruitful discussions, parties prepared a final document with a set of recommendations for implementing UNSCR 1540. Participants

reaffirmed the importance of a comprehensive approach to the implementation of UNSCR 1540, including through NAPs and regional cooperation on matters related to preventing the proliferation of WMDs. Additionally, the meeting discussed the results achieved on the recommendations from the Issyk-Kul round of peer review meetings in 2018.

<sup>12</sup> [OSCE-supported event enhances efforts of Central Asia and Mongolia to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction | OSCE](#)

## **BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

Key outcomes identified through the OSCE-supported peer review meetings include strengthening national legislation on export control, implementing the BWC and CWC, establishing effective control mechanisms over WMD-related materials, and enhancing both inter-agency coordination and regional cooperation. The meetings also highlighted the critical role of international cooperation and the need for continuous engagement with international partners, industry, and civil society.

In all peer review meetings, representatives of the 1540 Committee Group of Experts, as well as officials from other relevant international organizations such as the BWC Implementation Support Unit, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and others, were actively involved, ensuring close co-

ordination among the international organizations involved in the implementation of UNSCR 1540. This collaboration enhanced the effectiveness of implementing UNSCR 1540 and maximized joint efforts in addressing non-proliferation challenges globally.

However, challenges remain, particularly regarding resource constraints and the lack of specialized experts. The peer review process helped to identify these challenges, providing a basis for targeted assistance by the OSCE and other international actors.

## **CONCLUSION**

The implementation of UNSCR 1540 is a continuous process that requires sustained effort and cooperation at both the national and international levels. The OSCE-supported peer review meetings have emerged as a best practice in facilitating this process, offering a model that other

regions and international organizations could replicate.

Looking forward, it is essential for States to leverage the momentum generated by these meetings to enhance their implementation efforts. The international community, including the OSCE, United Nations or other actors should continue to support these endeavours, providing the necessary resources and expertise to ensure that UNSCR 1540's objectives are fully implemented.

The OSCE's engagement in facilitating peer review meetings is a significant part of global efforts to implement UNSCR 1540 effectively. These meetings allow participating States to share best practices, challenges, and lessons learned in the implementation process, which will undoubtedly play a crucial role in shaping the global non-proliferation landscape.

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Participants at the peer review meeting in Istanbul, 8–10 November 2022. Photo credit: OSCE



Former Secretary-General of the OSCE at a meeting with the Security Council, urging closer cooperation between UN and regional organizations; Credit: UN Photo/Paulo Filgueiras