



**The Role of the Code of Conduct in the Parliamentary Control of
Armed and Security Forces – Future Challenges**

Berlin, 2 June 2016

OSCE Parliamentary Treasurer Doris Barnett (MP, Germany)

(English translation from German)

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much for inviting me to participate in today's conference.

We are living in a time of far-reaching change in the security-policy environment. Many experts believe that today's armed conflicts are increasing dramatically in intensity. We are seeing new moves towards rearmament, the re-emergence of tensions we thought had been overcome, and the flaring up of new conflicts.

The nature of these conflicts has changed, too. The situation is less predictable than it used to be. It has become much more complex and dynamic. The number of internal and external actors involved in a conflict has risen markedly, with violent non-state actors playing an ever-increasing role. Who's fighting whom? With whose support? To what end? With what agenda? It's virtually impossible to keep the overview, never mind predict what's going to happen. That is why we need intensive interdisciplinary, trans-sectoral, international cooperation, not least and especially among parliamentarians.

Similarly, the instruments used in armed conflicts are becoming more diverse. For some years now, the security debate has been dominated by the term "hybrid warfare". Civilian measures and economic, communications and technological tools are used to fan conflict, not promote peace.

Organised crime and violent economies are flourishing; they are profiting from every new conflict, from the erosion of state governance and from the lack of or incompetence of democratic structures.

Global terrorism has arrived at the heart of Europe.

Throughout the OSCE area and beyond, we are seeing radicalisation, polarisation and social division. In Europe, right-wing populists and EU sceptics have a worrying appeal. Confidence in democratic structures is sinking. The world, which is becoming ever more complex, no longer has any simple answers. But anyone who tries to explain dependencies, interconnections and consequences, rather than simply saying “let’s get on and do it”, not only is not believed, but is decried. Ever-expanding entities – be they organisations like the European Union, or one’s own country, with people from all over the world – cause disquiet, which vents itself as resurgent nationalism. This seems almost to be a natural phenomenon when the world as a whole undergoes great change. Last century, we twice saw what happens when disquiet turns into nationalism. We parliamentarians must learn lessons from that and do everything we can to ensure that it doesn’t happen a third time.

For we are already heading that way. We all know that new technologies bring not only opportunities, but also risks and dangers. Think only of the use of drones to deliver packages, carry out surveillance, launch weapons. As yet, no state uses fully automated weapons systems, but the trend to ever-increasing autonomy for weapons systems cannot be overlooked, and in technological terms, lethal autonomous weapons systems are by no means pie in the sky. Germany is one of the states calling for these fully automated weapons systems to be banned under international law.

If we look not only at Germany, but at the world, then we know that the issue of cyber security, too, will concern and challenge us for a long time yet.

The trend towards outsourced security services, privatised armed forces and autonomous intelligence services is another feature of our age.

All this, ladies and gentlemen, poses new challenges for security policy, and particularly for democratic control of security policy. In Germany, when it comes to Federal Armed Forces participation in missions abroad, the approval of parliament is needed. This is something other states regard as a tiresome delay.

Because we in the OSCE area have such different approaches to security issues, the question of the role of the OSCE Code of Conduct is justified and important. In the age of unconventional, complex threats, the OSCE will not be able to provide one single answer. There is a range of instruments that we can and will use.

The OSCE Code of Conduct remains unique in the world. What makes it so valuable, in particular, is the principle of democratic control, the extension of control to domestic security agencies and the combination of the politico-military and human dimensions. However, the principle is not of itself enough; it needs to be applied, universally if at all possible.

That's why an exchange of information and regular review conferences are important instruments for the implementation of the Code. They also serve as confidence-building instruments.

And confidence is exactly what we urgently need in the OSCE area again!

Within the scope of its foreign and security policy, Germany focuses above all on crisis prevention, civilian conflict resolution measures, democratic arms control and transparency, as well as global partnerships and cooperation.

The OSCE and its existing mechanisms play a special role in this context. The OSCE is an excellent platform for dialogue and confidence-building, especially because various parties to conflicts – not least the United States and Russia – sit here at the table as equals.

In the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, we try to use old and new formats to facilitate exchange about differing perceptions and narratives and to find common denominators. In April, for instance, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held the second Leinsweiler meeting, a seminar which flagged up historical examples of successful solutions to long-running, complex conflicts to 25 parliamentarians from 15 countries (including Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova) and provided a forum for dialogue in a spirit of trust.

It is a difficult process. And any instrument that creates more transparency is to be welcomed, as a basis for confidence-building and conflict prevention.

It is not enough to have data. They need to be evaluated and used. The data gathered in the course of the annual exchange of information must be analysed and interpreted much more effectively. Only then can they be used in negotiations.

A glance at the OSCE participating States' annual reports under the exchange of information is enough to show that the scope, degree of detail and precision of the information provided vary greatly. The fact that many terms in the Code are open to broad interpretation is nothing new: this is a general weakness that can easily lead to misunderstandings. However, the problem is also often the lack of political will and a democratic deficit in the country concerned.

However, the mere fact that all OSCE participating States do report, do fill in the questionnaire, is in itself progress. And that is something we do not wish to lose, even if we can argue about the quality of the information provided.

The principle of democratic control which makes the Code of Conduct so valuable urgently needs parliamentary support. It is about much more than just security issues; in the end, it is about involving

civil society. The possibilities open to political foundations for their work show us how this is being restricted more and more, not least in the OSCE area. That is why Germany attaches great importance to making the Code better known not only within the OSCE area, but also beyond.