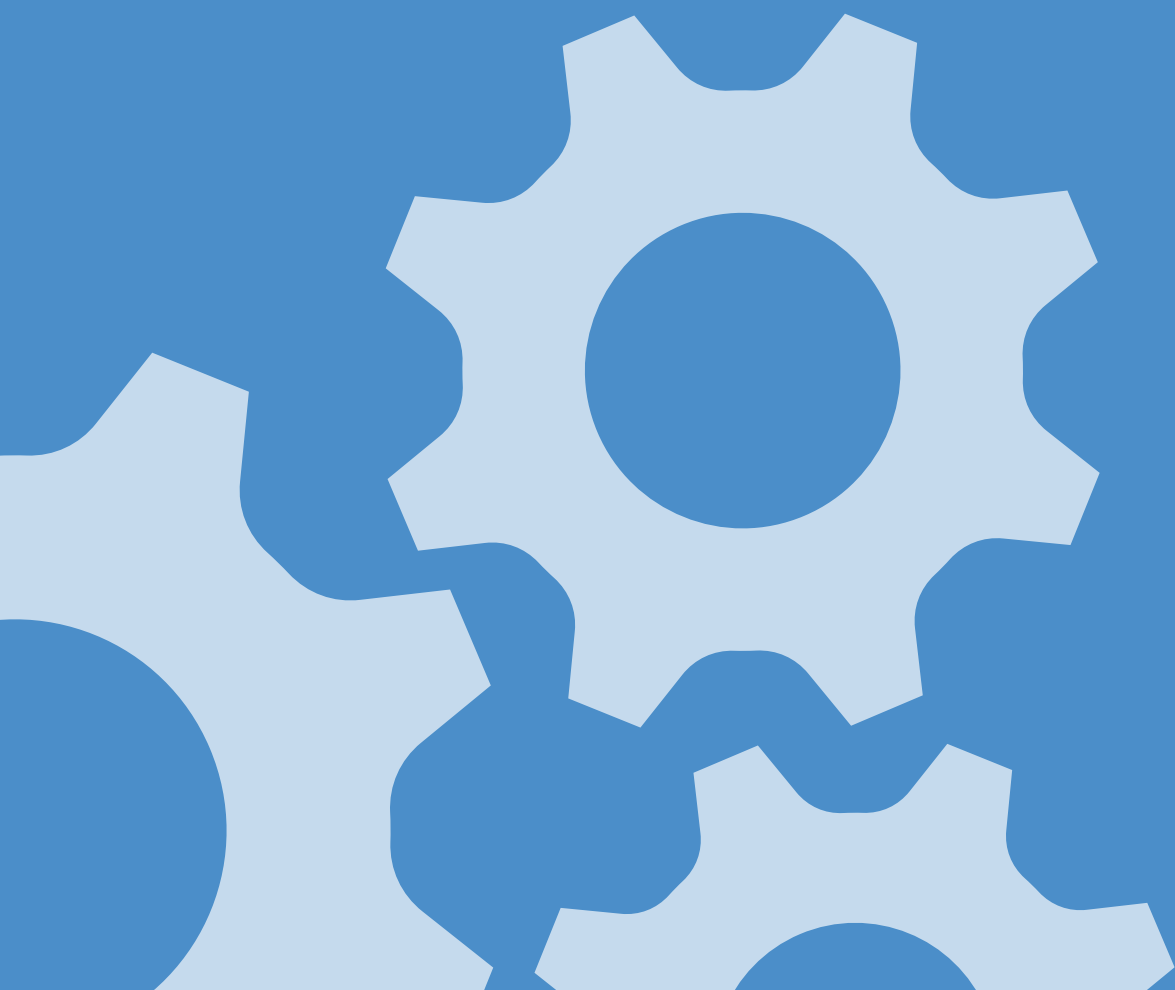

Guidelines for OSCE Staff

Understanding SSG/R in the OSCE Context



Executive Summary

This chapter presents the working definition of security sector governance and reform (SSG/R) in the OSCE context, clarifies its key components and outlines the guiding principles of the OSCE's approach to SSG/R assistance. It then discusses the relevance and benefits of a more coherent and co-ordinated OSCE approach. Particular attention is paid to the role of SSG/R within the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and in all phases of the conflict cycle, demonstrating the cross-dimensional nature of SSG/R and its role in conflict prevention and resolution, crisis management, post-conflict rehabilitation and peacebuilding. Finally, the SSG/R work of other key multilateral actors is briefly discussed, where relevant to the OSCE.

Key points from the chapter:

- **SSG/R is a political and technical process through which a country seeks to enhance the good governance of its security sector:** While there is no exhaustive and universally accepted definition of the security sector, it is generally understood to encompass all state and non-state security actors, as well as all the structures, institutions and personnel responsible for their management and oversight. Good security sector governance (SSG) means that the security sector is subject to the same standards of good governance as any other public sector. Commonly accepted principles of good SSG include respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, gender equality, participation, inclusivity and responsiveness. Activities that aim to improve and strengthen SSG are referred to as security sector reform (SSR).
- **The OSCE's SSG/R assistance is guided by several key principles:** The OSCE assists participating States in strengthening the governance of their security sectors in line with OSCE commitments. The Organization's SSG/R work is underpinned by several key principles, in that it:
 - Is nationally owned;
 - Fosters good and democratic security sector governance;
 - Promotes gender equality;
 - Is comprehensive and inclusive;
 - Is responsive to the security needs of the entire population;
 - Is co-ordinated and co-operative.
- **Applying an SSG/R approach to the OSCE's work with security sector institutions benefits both participating States and Executive Structures:** A more strategic approach to SSG/R strengthens cross-dimensional co-ordination and co-operation in the OSCE's work with security sector institutions. To that end, SSG/R provides a conceptual framework for operationalizing and fulfilling many OSCE commitments in all three dimensions of security, and

provides a framework for results-oriented, sustainable and efficient OSCE programming. By increasing responsiveness and efficiency of the security sector, SSG/R also helps to more effectively counter contemporary security threats. Furthermore, the security sector plays an important role in all phases of the conflict cycle, including conflict prevention and resolution, crisis management, post-conflict rehabilitation and peacebuilding. In that connection, good SSG enhances public trust in security sector institutions, thus strengthening stability and reducing structural risks for instability and conflict. A well-governed security sector will also be more effective in managing and resolving crises and emergencies, should they arise. Thus, good governance of the security sector is important for sustainable peace and security and contributes to achieving the UN's sustainable development goals.

- **Other multilateral actors work on SSG/R:** A number of international and regional organizations play an active role in SSG/R by establishing policies, norms and standards, and implementing projects and programmes. Such organizations include, for instance, the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).



1. Rationale

1.1 A Comprehensive Approach to Security

Changes in the international security environment since the end of the Cold War and in the nature of conflicts, from predominantly inter-state to intra-state or hybrid conflicts, have created a paradigm shift in the understanding of security. The conventional state-centred model that primarily emphasized military aspects of security has been gradually complemented by a new concept that also recognizes non-military aspects of security and applies a people-centred approach, in that it centres on the security needs of all individuals and communities. The 1975 Helsinki Final Act can be seen as a precursor of this shift, as it pioneered a broader understanding of security at both the state and individual level. This broad understanding later evolved into the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security with its three dimensions: the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human dimension.

Security began to be seen as a matter of concern for all institutions – from legislative bodies and justice systems to all citizens, both as individuals and as members of civil society. It also began to be seen as a public good, which should be provided according to the same standards and principles as any other public service. The term “security sector” was coined and with it the concept of “security sector governance” and “security sector reform.”

1.2 Relevant OSCE Commitments

The OSCE has a long track record in supporting participating States in strengthening the governance of their security sectors and undertaking reforms in line with OSCE commitments. Many of the principles underpinning the concept of SSG/R are reflected in the OSCE's normative framework, such as in the **1994 ‘Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security’**. The Code of Conduct sets clear standards for effective democratic and civilian control of the military, paramilitary, police, intelligence and other internal security forces in national and international law, in ensuring respect for human rights, and in preventing excessive use of force. The commitments made within it therefore provide an important basis and entry points for the OSCE to assist participating States in ensuring good SSG.

Moreover, SSG/R principles can be found in many other existing OSCE commitments, such as those on democratic policing, human rights protection, gender mainstreaming, the rule of law, anti-corruption, good governance and many others. Consequently, SSG/R can be considered an integral part of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and can be understood as an approach for practical application of many of the existing OSCE commitments in the work with security sector institutions.

Info Box 1



Key Aspects of SSG/R in the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security

Chapter VII:

20. The participating States consider the democratic political control of military, paramilitary and internal security forces as well as of intelligence services and the police to be an indispensable element of stability and security.

21. Each participating State will at all times provide for and maintain effective guidance to and control of its military, paramilitary and security forces by constitutionally established authorities vested with democratic legitimacy.

22. Each participating State will provide for its legislative approval of defence expenditures. Each participating State will, with due regard to national security requirements, exercise restraint in its military expenditures and provide for transparency and public access to information related to the armed forces.

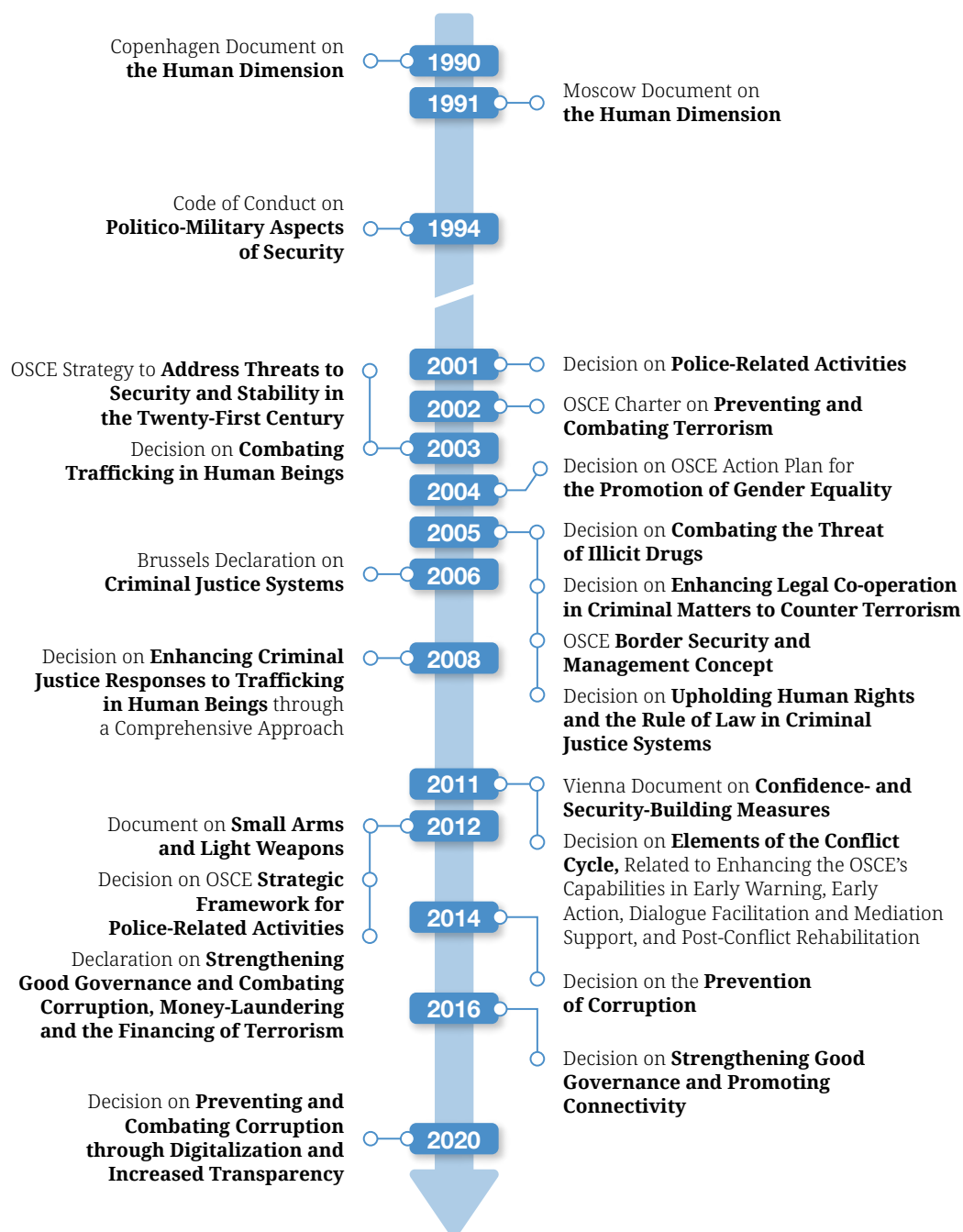
25. The participating States will not tolerate or support forces that are not accountable to or controlled by their constitutionally established authorities.

Chapter VIII:

35. Each participating State will ensure that its defence policy and doctrine are consistent with international law related to the use of armed forces, including in armed conflict, and the relevant commitments of this Code.

36. Each participating State will ensure that any decision to assign its armed forces to internal security missions is arrived at in conformity with constitutional procedures. Such decisions will prescribe the armed forces' missions, ensuring that they will be performed under the effective control of constitutionally established authorities and subject to the rule of law. If recourse to force cannot be avoided in performing internal security missions, each participating State will ensure that its use must be commensurate with the needs for enforcement. The armed forces will take due care to avoid injury to civilians or their property.

Figure 1: OSCE documents of relevance to SSG/R (non-exhaustive)



1.3 Building on Efforts towards a More Coherent and Co-ordinated Approach to SSG/R

There is no formal OSCE definition for SSG/R. In addition, there are different views among participating States as to what the OSCE's SSG/R assistance should entail. Nonetheless, SSG/R as a concept has been increasingly gaining recognition in recent years. Discussions about an "OSCE Concept on Security Sector Governance" go back at least to 2005 and were later taken up by the 2006 Belgian Chair. In 2007, the Spanish Chair issued a perception paper on SSG/R, "emphasizing that security sector reform/governance may play an essential role in a long-term process of peace-building, early warning, conflict prevention and resolution, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation, and thus represents an important confidence- and security-building measure."¹ Following a comprehensive mapping study conducted by the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) at the request of the Swiss Chair, a number of important steps were taken to promote and apply a more coherent and co-ordinated approach to SSG/R since 2014.

The first major milestone was the establishment by Slovakia, Switzerland and Serbia of the Group of Friends of SSG/R in June 2014, consisting of delegations of OSCE participating States in Vienna. Later that year, the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) launched a dedicated extra-budgetary project to support, raise awareness and build capacity on SSG/R within the OSCE. That same year, the CPC established a network of SSG/R focal points in all OSCE Executive Structures. Another milestone was the publication of the 'Guidelines on SSG/R for OSCE Staff' in 2016. In 2018, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Berlin adopted the resolution on '*Strengthening the OSCE's Approach to Supporting Security Sector Governance and Reform in Participating and Partner States*'. Further progress was made in the course of 2019 when the Slovak Chair put SSG/R high on the Organization's political agenda. The then Secretary General, Thomas Greminger, published the first ever report on the OSCE's approach to SSG/R and, in a joint statement at the 2019 Ministerial Council meeting in Bratislava, 44 participating States acknowledged SSG/R's relevance in the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security.² A similar statement at the 2021 Ministerial Council meeting in Stockholm was supported by 46 participating States.

1 For discussions back in 2005 and 2006, see Victor-Yves Ghebali, "The OSCE Norms and Activities Related to the Security Sector Reform: An Incomplete Puzzle," *Security and Human Rights*, 4, 2008, pp. 280–282.

2 The Group of Friends of SSG/R issued joined statements also at Ministerial Councils in 2014 (MC.DEL/72/14), 2015 (MC.DEL/55/15), 2016 (MC.DEL/52/16), 2017 (MC.DEL/54/17) and 2018 (MC.DEL/65/18).



- ▶ Spanish OSCE Chair (2007), *Chairmanship's Perception Paper on OSCE Basic Norms and Principles in the Field of Security Sector Governance/Reform*
- ▶ DCAF (2013), *Executive Summary: Mapping study on the Role of the OSCE in Security Sector Governance and Reform*
- ▶ OSCE (2016), *Guidelines on SSG/R for OSCE Staff (First Edition)*
- ▶ OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (2018), *Resolution on 'Strengthening the OSCE's Approach to Supporting Security Sector Governance and Reform in Participating and Partner States'*
- ▶ OSCE Secretariat (2019), *The OSCE Approach to Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R): Report by the Secretary General of the OSCE*
- ▶ OSCE Group of Friends of SSG/R (2019), *Statement on the OSCE's role in supporting security sector governance and reform as part of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security*
- ▶ OSCE Group of Friends of SSG/R (2021), *Joint statement on the OSCE's role in supporting security sector governance and reform as part of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security*



2. A Working Definition of SSG/R in the OSCE Context

The 2019 Secretary General's report underlines that, while there is no formal definition of SSG/R in the OSCE, a working definition has developed over time:

Good security sector governance means that the security sector is subject to the same standards of good governance as any other public sector.

Good governance standards and principles mean that the security sector is to provide security to the State and its people in an **accountable and effective way, within a framework of democratic civilian control, rule of law, respect for human rights, and the promotion of gender equality.**

Activities aimed at improving security sector governance are defined as **security sector reform** even if they are not always explicitly referred to as such.

Accordingly, **security sector governance and reform** is a political and technical process through which a country seeks to enhance the good governance of its security sector.³

To better understand this working definition, it is necessary to explore its individual components. These include the **security sector, security sector governance and security sector reform**. All of these components are underpinned by a people-centred approach to security, complementing the traditional state-centred approach.

3 See OSCE, *The OSCE Approach to Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R): Report by the Secretary General of the OSCE* (Vienna, 2019), SEC.GAL/42/19, p. 5.

2.1 The Security Sector

Providing security for men, women, boys and girls is one of the key functions of every state. While there is no exhaustive and universally accepted definition of the security sector, generally it is understood to encompass state- and non-state security actors, as well as all the structures, institutions and personnel responsible for provision, management and oversight of security.⁴ It is important to recognize that components of the security sector are always country-specific and will differ depending on the national context. Examples of some of the main security sector actors are included in the figure 2.

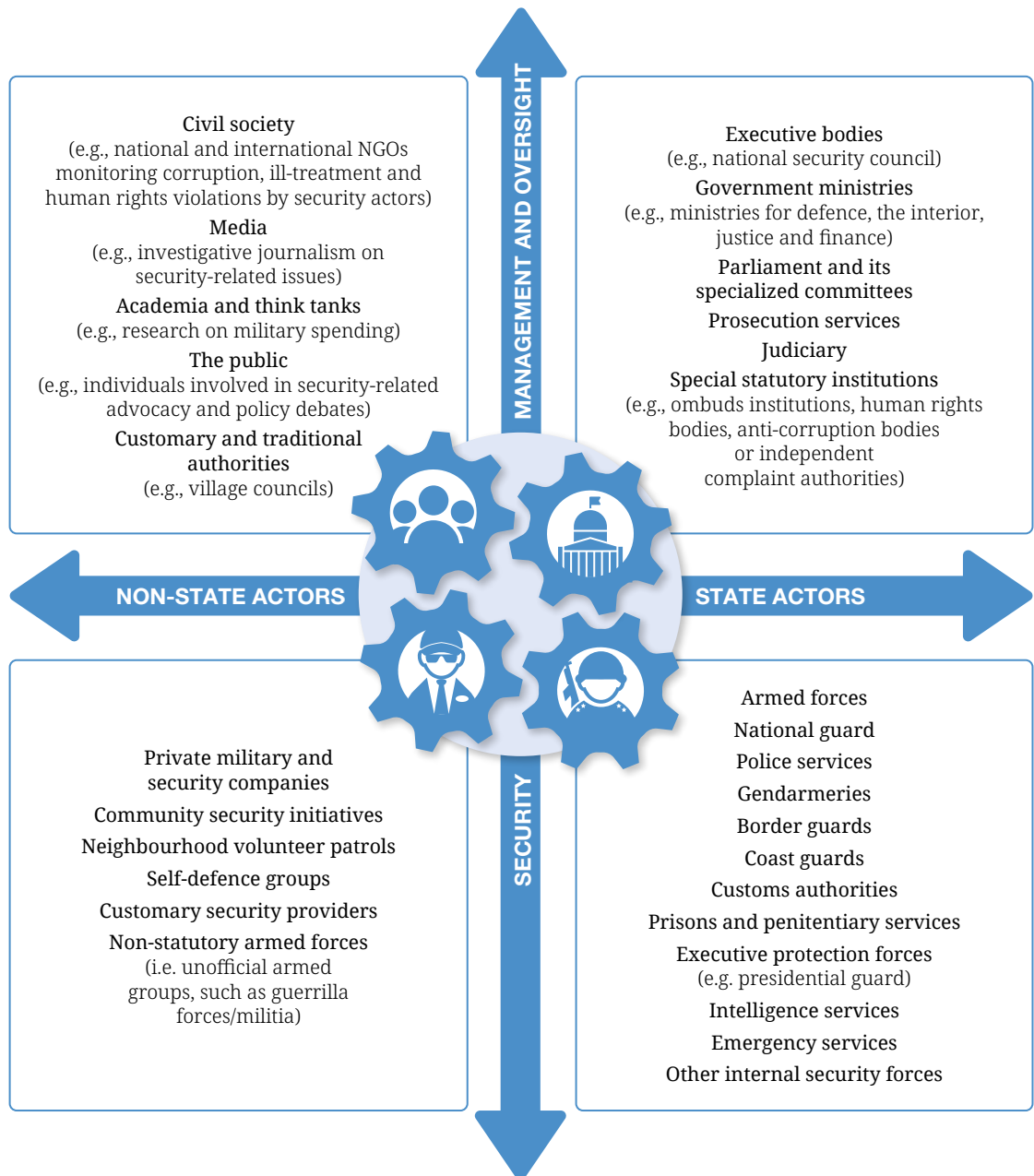
2.2 Security Sector Governance

Security sector governance relates to the principles of good governance and how they apply to security provision – i.e., the use of force, management and oversight – with the aim of meeting the security needs of all people in a society and making the most efficient and sustainable use of existing resources. Commonly accepted principles of good governance encompass the following:⁵

- **Accountability and transparency:** Accountability is the responsibility of duty bearers (the State and its security sector institutions, who hold the monopoly on legitimate use of force) towards rights holders (individuals and communities) in meeting their security needs and the existence of fully functioning oversight mechanisms to provide adequate checks and balances. Accountability in the security sector is pursued through internal and external mechanisms of control and oversight to ensure compliance with standards of conduct, integrity and legal obligations for the discharge of security functions. Internal formal control mechanisms can consist of disciplinary and other sanction procedures connected to the adherence of personnel to codes of conduct and other rules and procedures related to the provision of

4 OECD, *OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform* (Paris, 2007). Including non-state actors, in particular non-statutory armed forces (e.g., guerilla forces, militia), as security actors is a controversial issue due to the concern that recognizing their impact may indirectly contribute to their political legitimacy. This text only highlights that these actors can affect public safety and national security. Therefore, when mapping the security sector of a specific country, non-state (armed) actors need to be taken into consideration. This does not mean that they should be considered stakeholders or counterparts in any OSCE activities. Engaging other types of non-state actors, such as private security and military companies, may be highly relevant for SSG/R-related activities, as their regulation is an important element of good security sector governance. For the sake of consistency throughout these Guidelines, “security sector institutions” will be used when speaking about state security sector actors (e.g., police, armed forces, etc.) and “security sector actors” for both state and non-state actors.

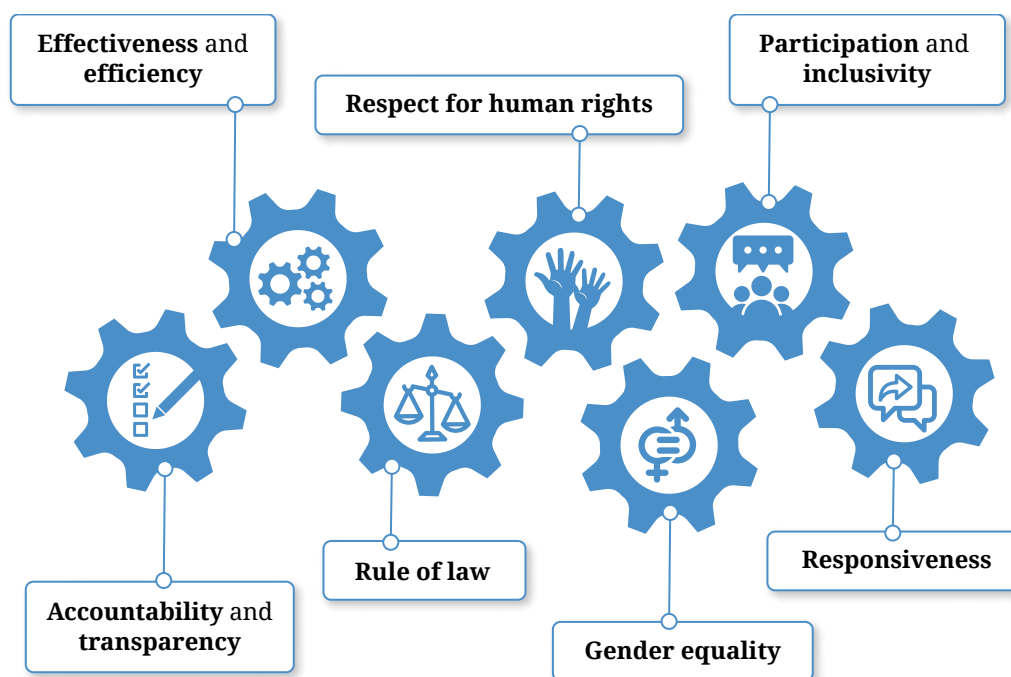
5 What follows should not be considered formal definitions of the principles. In fact, many of the concepts included in this overview do not have officially agreed definitions. The purpose is to explain their meaning in the context of SSG/R and provide examples of how they translate into practice.

Figure 2: Security sector actors

security services. External oversight typically focuses on compliance with standards of the rule of law and human rights and is exercised through formal democratic civilian control (e.g., by parliaments and national human rights institutions) and informal control and monitoring (e.g., by civil society, media and academia).

Transparency is a key element of accountability. A transparent security sector is one in which the necessary information is freely available and accessible to those who will be affected by decisions and their implementation. Moreover, the process of planning, programming, budgeting and implementation of security sector institutions is publicly available and adequate. Instances exist in which limitations in transparency are legitimate, and these are principally for the protection of state secrets or individual privacy.

Figure 3: Good security sector governance principles



- **Effectiveness and efficiency**: Security sector institutions fulfil their respective mandates to a high professional standard according to the diverse needs of all segments of society. Institutions work efficiently, making the best possible use of public resources – for example, by ensuring adequate organizational and managerial capacities, professional leadership, integrity of staff, sound financial management and planning, among others.

- **Rule of law⁶:** All security sector institutions are accountable and subjected to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced, independently adjudicated and consistent with international human rights norms and standards. Rule of law also requires measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of the law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness, and procedural and legal transparency. In practice, this means that the use of force and the mandates of different security sector institutions are clearly defined by law and that their activities are compliant with human rights standards. The rule of law is relevant to security sector governance as it provides safeguards against arbitrariness by security sector institutions and, at the same time, safeguards for justice in case of human rights violations by members of the security sector.
- **Human rights:** Respecting and protecting human rights is a core function of security sector institutions, and as such, should inform the approach of relevant actors in providing security to the communities they serve. The right to a fair trial, the absolute prohibition of torture, the right to non-discrimination and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly are, among others, all directly relevant to the work of security sector institutions. Security sector institutions that respect and protect human rights enjoy public confidence, making their work more effective and conducive to stability in a given society. The respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is an integral element of the Helsinki Final Act and the OSCE's regional security framework. As stated in the Charter of Paris, protection and promotion of human rights is the first responsibility of government; respect for them is an essential safeguard against an over-mighty State.⁷
- **Gender equality:** Gender plays an important role in societal inequality, as it puts women, men, boys and girls in different positions of power, risk, security and insecurity. For example, women, men, boys and girls have different needs and experiences when accessing security and justice services. Therefore, security sector institutions need to integrate a gender perspective throughout their work to effectively respond to different needs and avoid perpetuating discrimination. Achieving gender equality involves a positive obligation to transform unequal power relations; to address the underlying causes and structures of gender inequality, including discriminatory norms, prejudices and stereotypes; and to transform institutions that perpetuate discrimination and inequality. Security sector institutions must uphold gender equality within their own structures through inclusive policies and practices that promote the recruitment, retention and promotion of women and under-represented groups. Likewise, they must create conducive environments that are free of harassment and abuse and that address gender stereotypes that hamper effective security delivery.

6 There is also a broader understanding of the rule of law as an entire system of governance rather than only as one of the principles of good governance or a statutory body of laws.

7 OSCE, *Charter of Paris for a New Europe* (Paris, 1990).

- **Participation and inclusivity:** All persons of all backgrounds have the opportunity to participate in decision-making and security provision on a free, equitable and inclusive basis, either directly or through legitimate representative institutions. Security sector institutions should also be representative of the communities they serve and ensure equal participation and representation – at all levels, including in senior management positions – of women and other underrepresented groups (e.g., ethnic and other minorities).
- **Responsiveness:** Institutions are sensitive to the different security needs of all parts of the population and perform their missions in the spirit of public service, without discrimination. They recognize that the security needs of men, women, boys, and girls vary and actively apply gender and youth perspectives in executing their mandates.

2.3 Security Sector Reform

Activities to improve and strengthen SSG are referred to as **security sector reform (SSR)**. SSR can be understood as a continuous political and technical process through which a country seeks to enhance the good governance of its security sector. In short, the goal of SSR is good SSG. However, not all activities aimed at improving SSG are explicitly referred to as SSR, even though they share the same purpose and principles. All countries, including those with well-functioning and well-governed security sector institutions, need to engage in continuous reform processes in order to maintain their resilience to crises, to evaluate service effectiveness and to adjust their capacities to respond to emerging trends and evolving security needs. Furthermore, many broader public administration reforms may also have an impact on SSG, for example, reforms of civil service or human resources policies for state employees or changes in budgeting and procurement.

SSR activities can take place at different (and at times overlapping) levels:

- Strategic (e.g., related to legal, political and policy frameworks)
- Organizational (e.g., related to organizational structures, guidelines, regulations)
- Operational (e.g., related to specific procedures and processes)

SSR activities address a wide range of political and technical aspects of security and focus on processes that affect the following:

- The entire security sector (e.g., gender mainstreaming)
- A particular locality or level of government within the security sector (e.g., municipal security provision)
- One sub-sector of security policy or provision (e.g., police reform)
- The role of a particular institution that is engaged in security provision, management or oversight of the security sector (e.g., ombuds institutions)

Info Box 2



Concepts Related to SSG/R

Women, Peace and Security (WPS): The ground-breaking United Nations (UN) Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) recognized the importance of women's full and equal participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Also recognizing that conflict affects women differently than men, it calls for measures to address the specific needs of women and girls before and after conflict. By the year 2020, the UN Security Council had adopted nine additional resolutions, which together comprise the WPS agenda.⁸ Five of these WPS resolutions explicitly refer to SSR, linking it with preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. As a priority for SSR in addressing sexual violence, they identify the need for more women to be included in the security sector and for current and potential members of the security sector to be vetted to exclude perpetrators of sexual violence. More holistically, the WPS resolutions recognize that SSR should help ensure women's protection from violence during and after conflict, women's equal and effective participation in SSR processes and women's access to justice. Similarly, when the UN Security Council adopted resolutions 2151 and 2553 on SSR in 2014 and 2020 respectively, it emphasized the importance of women's equal and effective participation in SSR processes, of including more women in the security sector and of vetting processes to exclude perpetrators of sexual violence.⁹ The WPS agenda also calls for a gender perspective to be mainstreamed in all international peace and security missions.

Transitional justice: Transitional justice consists of the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses in order to ensure accountability, to serve justice and to achieve reconciliation. Transitional justice may include both judicial and non-judicial mechanisms, with differing levels of international involvement (or none at all), as well as individual prosecutions, reparations, truth-seeking, institutional reform, vetting and dismissals, or a combination thereof.¹⁰

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR): DDR is a process through which members of armed forces and groups are supported in laying down their weapons and returning to civilian life. Disarmament is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of the small arms, ammunition, explosives, and light and heavy weapons of combatants. Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other groups. Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and

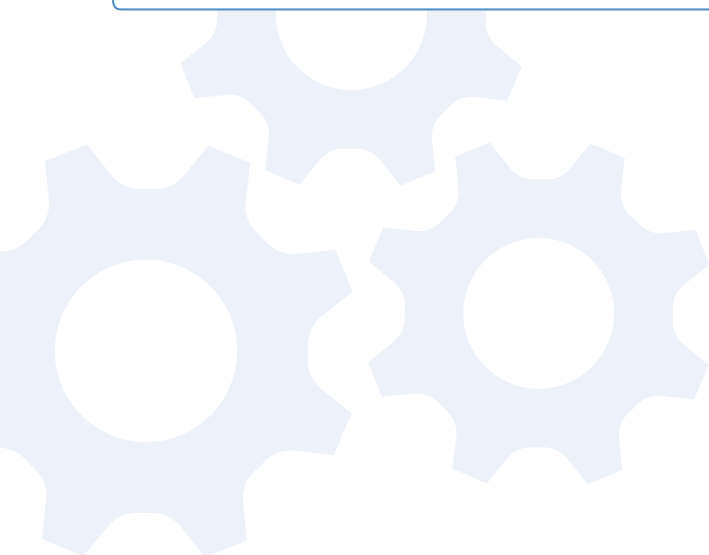
8 DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women, "Security Sector Governance, Security Sector Reform and Gender," in *Gender and Security Toolkit* (Geneva, 2019), p. 2.

9 DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women, *Policy Brief: A Security Sector Governance Approach to Women, Peace and Security* (Geneva, 2019).

10 United Nations SSR Task Force, *UN Integrated Technical Guidance Notes on Security Sector Reform* (New York, 2012), p. xi.

gain sustainable employment and income.¹¹ While different in their objectives, DDR and SSG/R intersect in many areas. Certain security actors will be subjected to DDR processes, while others can be deeply involved in DDR implementation and oversight.

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW): OSCE participating States recognize that the accumulation and uncontrolled spread of SALW have contributed to the intensity and duration of most recent armed conflicts. An ineffective, corrupt and overly centralized security sector can create a demand for SALW among individuals and groups, due to increased feelings of insecurity. When the security sector is not capable of providing protection, individuals and groups seek alternative ways to ensure security, including by acquiring SALW.¹² SALW-control measures are consequently linked to SSG/R at the strategic and operational levels. At the strategic level, they can provide a framework for SALW control in political negotiations and agreements, such as national security policies, reforms, strategies, plans and legislation; national dialogues; and national management and oversight capacities. At the operational level, SALW-control measures can help to ensure the practical application of SSG/R principles, for example, through train-and-equip programmes, upgrades of SALW infrastructure, the development and/or improvement of regulations, and the strengthening of intra- and inter-agency co-ordination and co-operation. Furthermore, a well-functioning security sector contributes to restoring and extending the legitimacy of state authority, thereby decreasing incentives for individuals and groups to acquire SALW.



11 Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, *Briefing Note for Senior Managers on the United Nations Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Standards* (2019).

12 United Nations, *Small arms and light weapons in the context of Security Sector Reform* (2020).

3. Guiding Principles of the OSCE's SSG/R Assistance

The OSCE assists participating States in strengthening the governance of their security sectors in line with the Organization's commitments. The provision of such assistance is underpinned by several key principles, as outlined in the statements on the OSCE's role in SSG/R made by participating States at the 2019 and 2021 Ministerial Councils¹³ and in the 2019 OSCE Secretary General's report on the OSCE's approach to SSG/R.¹⁴ As such, the OSCE's SSG/R assistance:

- **Is nationally owned:** Support provided by the OSCE should be based on a request for assistance from a participating State and be aligned with its national priorities for reform. The concept of SSG/R acknowledges national ownership as a necessary element for success. Thus, SSG/R processes are fundamentally demand-driven and nationally-led.
- **Fosters good and democratic SSG:** The OSCE's support should foster democratic civilian control, the rule of law and full respect for human rights.
- **Promotes gender equality:** An essential element of SSG/R is the full, equal and active involvement of women in SSG/R, as well as the promotion of women's meaningful participation in the security sector on strategic and operational levels.
- **Is comprehensive and inclusive:** SSG/R support should take a cross-dimensional approach, based on the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security, in order to take account of the holistic nature of national SSG/R processes and to promote the meaningful participation of all segments of society, including civil society.
- **Is responsive to the security needs of the entire population:** SSG/R support should take into consideration needs of all segments of society, including youth, and follow approaches that are gender-responsive and respect human rights. All SSG/R support should be grounded in a thorough understanding of the given context and based on a comprehensive needs assessment.¹⁵

13 OSCE Group of Friends of SSG/R, *Statement on the OSCE's role in supporting security sector governance and reform as part of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security* (Bratislava, 2019), MC.DEL/63/19. OSCE Group of Friends of SSG/R, *Joint statement on the OSCE's role in supporting security sector governance and reform as part of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security* (Stockholm, 2021), MC.DEL/44/21.

14 OSCE, *The OSCE Approach to Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R): Report by the Secretary General of the OSCE* (Vienna, 2019), SEC.GAL/42/19.

15 For more, see the chapter "[Needs Assessments in the Field of SSG/R](#)".

- Is **co-ordinated and co-operative**: OSCE activities should be co-ordinated with other relevant actors at the local, national, regional and international levels. Such co-operation should build on the OSCE's added value and comparative advantages.

4. The Relevance and Benefits of a Coherent and Co-ordinated OSCE Approach to SSG/R Assistance

SSG/R is highly relevant for the OSCE's engagement with security sector institutions, as it brings multiple benefits to both participating States and OSCE Executive Structures.

4.1 SSG/R as an Integral Part of the OSCE's Comprehensive Approach to Security

The principles underpinning SSG/R are very much in line with the OSCE's **comprehensive concept of security**, which encompasses the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions. SSG/R promotes the need for a comprehensive approach when working with the security sector that takes into account inter-linkages between various actors and thematic issues.¹⁶ It calls for due consideration of different reform processes that are mutually reinforcing (police reform, justice reform, etc.), instead of dealing with such processes individually. SSG/R also recognizes that successful security sector reform goes beyond the changes made in individual components of the sector, which often only enhance the capacities, effectiveness and professionalism of individual security sector institutions. Activities related to SSG/R therefore usually cut across all OSCE dimensions and involve a holistic understanding of security and the actors involved in security provision, management and oversight. SSG/R can thus be understood as an approach that operationalizes the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security when working with security sector institutions.

A more strategic, coherent and co-ordinated approach to SSG/R can therefore help to strengthen cross-dimensional co-ordination and co-operation. By following such an approach, the OSCE can move beyond fragmentation in its programmatic activities towards more comprehensively integrating commitments and mandates that have previously been addressed in isolation. In this way, more effective support for national reform processes can be facilitated. Given that the security sector is often mainly viewed through a politico-military lens, it is important to underline that many aspects

16 For concrete examples, see the figure 1 in the chapter [“Cross-Dimensional Approaches to SSG/R”](#).

within the human, economic and environmental dimensions are indispensable elements in the overall approach to SSG/R. By taking such a comprehensive approach to SSG/R, a high level of synergy can be created when working with security institutions.¹⁷

4.2 SSG/R as a Framework for Results-Oriented, Sustainable and Efficient OSCE Programming

In times of an increasingly complex security environment, which is putting many different demands on states and their security sector institutions, it is crucial to make the most efficient use of all available resources and expertise. Strengthening cross-dimensional co-ordination and co-operation also means making more strategic, efficient and coherent use of resources to obtain better value for money. With regard to SSG/R activities, efficiencies can be achieved by working jointly with relevant actors rather than with individuals. This could mean, for example, implementing joint activities with all actors in the criminal justice sector rather than separate activities with police, prosecutors, judges or prison officials. Furthermore, the OSCE's work on SSG/R is embedded in a long-term process of transformation focused on broader institution building, with the aim of ensuring the good management and financial sustainability of reform efforts. SSG/R as a framework for programming means moving away from ad-hoc projects and moving towards applying a (more) strategic, holistic and long-term approach to change.¹⁸

4.3 SSG/R as an Important Contribution to National Reform Processes

SSG/R principles are enshrined in multiple OSCE commitments related to the functioning of security sector institutions in areas such as democratic and civilian oversight, democratic policing, human rights protection, gender mainstreaming, the rule of law, anti-corruption, good governance, countering terrorism, border management, SALW reduction and many others. SSG/R thus provides a **conceptual framework for operationalizing and fulfilling many OSCE commitments in practice.**¹⁹

17 For more, see the chapter [“Cross-Dimensional Approaches to SSG/R”](#).

18 For more, see the chapter [“Results-Oriented Programming in the Field of SSG/R”](#).

19 For example, see the chapter [“Supporting Governance-Driven Approaches to Building Integrity Building in the Security Sector”](#).

Furthermore, by placing emphasis on increasing the effectiveness and professionalism of security sector institutions, SSG/R contributes to an accountable, well-governed security sector, which follows a people-centred approach and is able to serve as a provider and guardian of security for all people. This **contributes to enhancing public trust**, as an accountable security sector increases confidence and trust between public and the state, strengthens legitimacy of state institutions and reduces the potential for tension and conflict in a given society.

Good SSG also helps to **more effectively counter existing and evolving security threats**, in particular, transnational threats. Security threats and risks are becoming more complex and inter-connected than ever before and are often exacerbated by economic asymmetries, social divisions, poor governance and weak institutions. Many of today's security threats – such as organized crime, terrorism, cybercrime, trafficking in human beings and illicit goods, as well as the security risks arising from pandemics – require multi-dimensional responses. None of these issues can be effectively addressed by one institution or state alone. They require close co-operation among various actors at the local, national and international levels. As a framework that promotes a comprehensive approach to security, trying to break silos, at the same time fostering regional co-operation, SSG/R can contribute to preventing and countering transnational threats.²⁰ By applying good governance principles, the resiliency and agility of security sector institutions can be strengthened, thus increasing their ability to adapt to the rapidly evolving security needs of the individuals and communities they serve.

4.4 SSG/R and the Conflict Cycle

Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/11 on 'Elements of the Conflict Cycle' recognizes the need for a comprehensive and cross-dimensional response in addressing the multi-faceted causes of crises and conflicts.

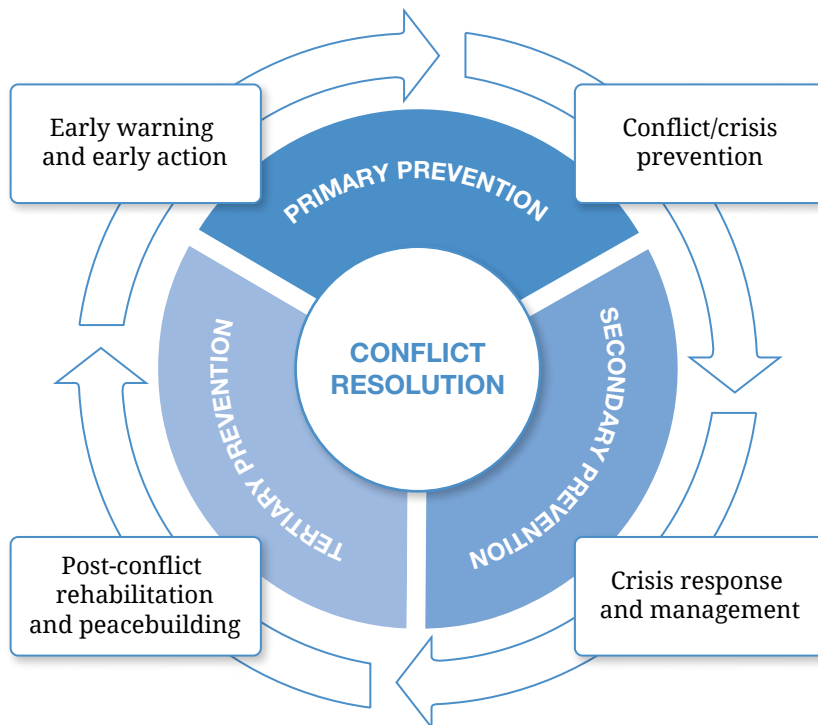
Many violent conflicts around the world have links to structural deficiencies in the security sector. Security sector institutions that are poorly managed, corrupt, politicized, ineffective, neither inclusive nor representative of the population they serve, commit human rights violations and are not sufficiently accountable are themselves a root cause of conflict. Moreover, they have the potential to destabilize already fragile situations and can become a driver of conflict instead of contributing to conflict prevention. Empirical evidence suggests that countries with poorly governed security sectors have a 30 to 45 per cent higher risk of violence and civil conflict.²¹ On the other hand, a

20 For more, see the chapters [“Cross-Dimensional Approaches to SSG/R”](#) and [“Strengthening Regional Co-operation on SSG/R”](#).

21 Dorith Kool and Tim Sweijts, *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: A Framework to Assess Security Sectors' Potential Contribution to Stability* (The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2020), p. 20.

well-functioning security sector, governed in line with OSCE commitments and principles, increases crisis resilience and contributes to stability. An accountable security sector that responds to the needs of the entire population is therefore vital to effective conflict prevention.

Figure 4: Conflict cycle



Many participating States have acknowledged the importance of effective and accountable security sector institutions and their significant contribution to early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and resolution, post-conflict rehabilitation and sustainable peacebuilding. This has also let the OSCE Secretary General to recommend in his report to “further integrate SSG/R into the OSCE’s conflict cycle toolbox in order to strengthen the OSCE’s work in SSG/R in the context of global efforts to prevent conflict and sustain peace.”²²

For these reasons, any conflict analysis needs to recognize the role of the security sector, as well as SSG/R in conflict prevention. By the same token, SSG/R assistance should always be conflict sensitive and conscious of the different phases of the conflict cycle and the respective role that SSG/R can play in these phases. This will help to ensure long-term sustainability and effectiveness

22 OSCE, *The OSCE Approach to Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R): Report by the Secretary General of the OSCE* (Vienna, 2019), SEC.GAL/42/19, p. 14.

of reform efforts, e.g., by allowing for adequate consideration of conflict dynamics and applying a do-no-harm approach, especially vis-à-vis groups that are in a situation of vulnerability, when engaging with security sector institutions.²³

A key conceptual foundation of the OSCE's conflict cycle toolbox is a 'tiered approach' to addressing the different phases of the conflict cycle. This approach encompasses primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.²⁴

4.4.1 Primary prevention: Conflict prevention, early warning and early action

Primary prevention refers to preventing violent conflict by successfully applying early warning and early action instruments and by implementing long-term measures that address root causes of conflict. It aims at sustaining peace through fostering peaceful mechanisms for management and conflict resolution, thereby preventing conflicts from escalating into violence.

As state security sector institutions have a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, they are by default one of the key players in both **long-term structural and short-term operational prevention**. Unlike civil society, the contribution of security sector institutions to structural prevention is not always visible. This contribution is related to the way how they provide security (i.e., use of force) and how they are managed and overseen. Good governance of the security sector in line with OSCE commitments and principles helps to avoid the risk of security sector institutions becoming root causes or even drivers for conflicts and instability. Engaging in SSG/R assistance to ensure the full implementation of OSCE commitments and principles is thus vital in terms of structural prevention.

On the other hand, in the case of operational prevention, especially in crisis situations, security sector institutions receive a lot of attention, and depending on how they handle the situation, they can contribute either to de-escalation or to a further escalation. Therefore, it is equally important in the context of operational prevention that security sector institutions act in line with OSCE commitments and principles and contribute to the de-escalation, rather than to the escalation, of a crisis situation. OSCE assistance to SSG/R thus supports both structural and operational prevention.

In addition, SSG/R promotes approaches that foster the participation of women and other marginalized groups (e.g., ethnic minorities) in security sector institutions, which is also key to structural

23 The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, *Recommendations on Policing in Multi-Ethnic Societies* (The Hague, 2006) and *Graz Recommendations on Access to Justice and National Minorities* (The Hague, 2017) offer practical guidance in this regard.

24 Michael Raith, "Addressing the Conflict Cycle – The OSCE's Evolving Toolbox" in *OSCE Insights* (Hamburg: IFSH, 2020).

prevention. Only an inclusive security sector can ensure effective service delivery, ensuring that security needs of the entire population are effectively addressed and avoid grievances that may fuel conflict.

For all of these reasons, SSG/R is relevant for **early warning** and **early action**. Potential deficiencies in a country's security sector and their impact on the country's capacities to address security needs and challenges represent important early warning signals. Only accountable security sector institutions that respect the rule of law and human rights can fully gain the public's trust and be able to respond effectively to the security needs of the entire population, thereby ensuring equal access to security and justice and contributing to structural conflict prevention and peace. On the contrary, unequal or no access to security and justice due to security sector institutions being ineffective, corrupt or without democratic oversight, committing human rights violations, or discriminating against specific groups, instigates collective grievances that may lead to social unrest and violence or fuel already existing conflicts.

In the area of early action, the OSCE has a set of formal instruments to defuse tensions before they escalate into violence.²⁵ Security sector institutions are among the most relevant interlocutors at this stage, as they will often be the ones operationally contributing to preventing further tensions and violence (or escalating them). Moreover, the OSCE has a long track record in applying military confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs), as well as non-military confidence-building measures (CBMs). CSBMs include various transparency and verification measures, risk reduction mechanisms or the exchange of military information. SSG/R can provide a number of thematic entry points for development and implementation of such CSBMs and CBMs and vice versa.

4.4.2 Secondary prevention: Crisis response and management

When conflicts escalate into violence, secondary prevention aims to contain the violence and return the conflict to a non-violent level, thereby paving the way for non-violent means of conflict resolution. While the performance of security sector institutions at this stage will very much depend on previous SSG/R efforts, it needs to be recognized that SSG/R activities as such may often only play a limited role during crisis response and management, as they usually consist of more long-term processes. However, there are some entry points for SSG/R also in secondary prevention.

When violence escalates, efforts must be taken to cease hostilities. In that regard, dialogue facilitation, mediation and ceasefires provide a critical space for conflict parties to engage in discussion with each other. Such talks can set the tone for further peace negotiations, including on issues relevant for SSG/R that might form an important part of a peace agreement. Working actively

25 A brief summary of the main mechanisms and procedures available within the OSCE is provided in OSCE, *OSCE Mechanisms and Procedures: Summary/Compendium* (Vienna, 2011).

with security sector actors is also important for agreeing on and ensuring security arrangements necessary for peace processes to take place. Many definitive, conclusive peace agreements include SSG/R elements, such as provisions on defence, police, justice, and intelligence reforms. Specific roadmaps can be developed for SSG/R provisions in peace agreements.²⁶

Another entry point for SSG/R in secondary prevention is the need to engage with security actors even before full cessation of military hostilities. Such engagement is often important not only for providing security operationally on the ground but also as a foundation of future reform processes.

The success of conflict resolution processes and related SSG/R processes, such as protection of civilians and upholding humanitarian law, depends on not only the political will of the parties but also how inclusive the process is. In conflict resolution, women are often key actors for change at the grassroots level. However, they have limited access to official peace talks. For peace processes to be sustainable, women need to be meaningfully included in both formal and informal negotiations, including in processes dealing with SSG/R. In post conflict situations, women have specific security needs that must be taken into account at the negotiation table already. This requires women to belong to negotiation and dialogue processes in a meaningful way. Investments should also be made in unofficial dialogue and conflict resolution activities, as well as in grassroots activities, such as partnerships between civil society and the security sector.

4.4.3 Tertiary prevention: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peacebuilding

Tertiary prevention aims to avoid the recurrence of violent conflict. This involves the effective implementation of peace agreements, efforts at reconciliation, and activities that foster peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms, as well as help address old or new root causes and drivers of conflict, including CBMs. SSG/R programming can significantly contribute to post-conflict rehabilitation and sustainable peacebuilding, as security sector institutions are once more among the key actors at this stage of the conflict cycle.

In the immediate post-conflict period, international assistance might be primarily focused on military assistance, training and equipment (“hard security”) to avoid an immediate relapse into violence. However, to build sustainable peace, such activities need to be coupled with much more comprehensive and long-term efforts that address more subtle and systematic conflict drivers. In this context, SSG/R programmes and projects can play essential roles – for example, by promoting human rights compliance, transitional justice and reconciliation, governance-driven approaches for effective service delivery and DDR processes that are well con-

26 For example, specific provisions with regard to the formation of the Constitutional Court in the Ohrid Agreement are explicitly conflict sensitive and institutionalize conflict prevention. As part of legislative modernization measures, specific police reform parameters are listed. The section concerning the cessation of military hostility refers to the disbandment of paramilitary armed regiments and adoption of the NATO rules and conditions.

nected to overall reform processes. Illustrative examples of CBMs used in tertiary prevention are trust building efforts with regard to police redeployment in former areas in South Eastern Europe or the Community Security Initiative in Kyrgyzstan.²⁷

SSG/R processes in areas that have experienced violent conflict must be comprehensive and take into account the complexity of post-conflict situations, such as the proliferation of SALW and the breakdown of public services, including in the security sector. In such contexts, all parts of the population, in particular the most vulnerable ones and those most heavily affected by the previous period of violence, need to experience that their security needs are effectively addressed. The existence of strong democratic institutions is central in this regard and forms a key component of sustainable peace. SSG/R work on strengthening democratic oversight, accountability, inclusivity and responsiveness of security sector can thus be an essential contribution to such efforts.

It must be kept in mind that changes in security sector management and long-term capacity and institution building require time. Therefore, SSG/R approaches that contribute to post-conflict rehabilitation and peacebuilding need to be implemented with a long-term perspective and in the framework of overarching strategies.

4.5 SSG/R's Contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals

SSG/R plays an important role in sustainable peace and security and is essential for **sustainable development**. A key element of sustainable development is stability, which is increased by a well-functioning security sector. In the 2019 Ministerial Council statement on the OSCE's role in SSG/R, 44 participating States recognized that “an inclusive, accountable and democratically controlled security sector with full respect for human rights and the rule of law can promote confidence and trust between society and state and stability in the entire OSCE region”.²⁸

Thus, good SSG directly supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in particular, SDG 5 on Gender Equality and SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. The OSCE's co-operation on SSG/R with other multilateral organizations – in particular the UN and the EU – also supports SDG 17 on Partnership for the Goals.

27 For more details on these examples, please see OSCE, *OSCE Guide on Non-military Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs)* (Vienna, 2013).

28 OSCE Group of Friends of SSG/R, *Statement on the OSCE's role in supporting security sector governance and reform as part of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security* (Bratislava, 2019), MC.DEL/63/19.

Info Box 3

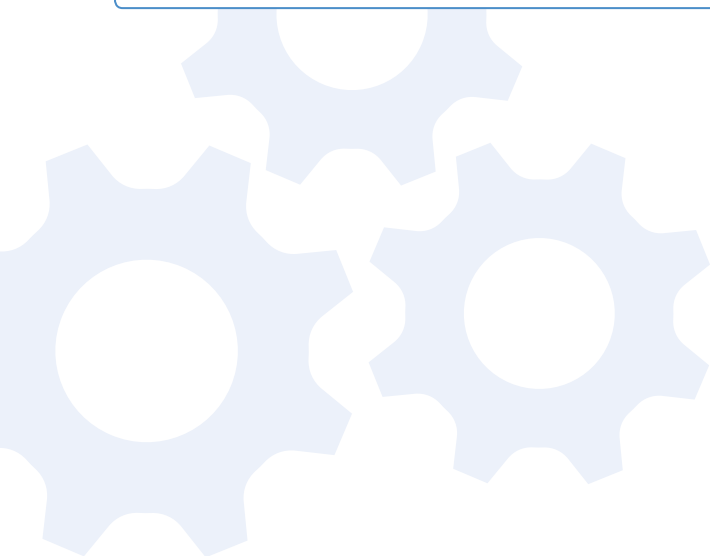
**UN Sustainable Development Goals Most Relevant to SSG/R**

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

- ▶ Target 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.
- ▶ Target 5c: Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

- ▶ Target 16.3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.
- ▶ Target 16.4: By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime.
- ▶ Target 16.5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.
- ▶ Target 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.
- ▶ Target 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.
- ▶ Target 16a: Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.



5. SSG/R in the Multilateral Context

Many international, regional and national organizations play an active role in SSG/R. They provide expertise and advice, raise awareness, and develop national capacities for good SSG, including democratic oversight, human rights and the rule of law. International and regional organizations also play a central role in establishing policies, in setting norms and standards, in ensuring accountability and in promoting the rule of law.²⁹

United Nations: At the policy level, the UN Security Council has adopted two landmark resolutions on SSR (in 2008 and 2013), and the UN Secretary-General has published two reports on the subject in 2008 and 2013 respectively. At the operational level, the UN has dedicated sector-wide SSR structures in many of its field offices. The SSR Unit, located in the Office of Rule of Law & Security Institutions in the Department of Peace Operations, serves as the focal point and technical resource capacity on SSR for the UN system, as well as national and international partners. It also serves as the Secretariat for the UN SSR Inter-Agency Task Force, a co-ordination mechanism for the delivery of coherent SSR support, which currently consists of 14 UN entities.³⁰ A first volume of the UN integrated technical-guidance notes on SSR was published in 2012, another one in 2016, with a third volume forthcoming.

While a number of UN entities work on SSG/R-related issues, the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime** (UNODC) has been particularly active in this field. It has developed a variety of publications and tools on SSG/R-related topics, such as crime prevention, criminal justice, police reform and prison reform. It works with security sector actors across the globe and is a strategic partner of the OSCE, with which it has been collaborating on the basis of joint action plans since 2011.

The **World Bank** emphasizes the key role that SSG can play in understanding and preventing violent conflict. In a 2018 report, published jointly with the UN, the World Bank acknowledges that SSR can play a key role in building the credibility, legitimacy and effectiveness of a society. In its *Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020–2025* the World Bank includes engagement with the security sector as one of its six priority areas for preventing and mitigating fragility, conflict and violence challenges.

Another key multilateral actor is the **European Union** (EU). Since the early 2000s, EU institutions have been gradually increasing their support to SSR-related activities through both financial and non-financial instruments. These primarily include development programmes, peace

29 All publications mentioned in the following paragraphs are summarized in Info Box 4.

30 For more, see United Nations Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform, *Report of the High-Level Panel and Discussion on the United Nations and Security Sector Reform: Between Policy and Practice* (2020).

and stability instruments,³¹ and the activities of CSDP missions deployed in non-EU countries. An EU-wide strategic framework on SSR was developed in 2016. This led to increased support of SSR by all the EU actors and to the establishment of the EU SSG facility that serves as a technical standing capacity to better support the SSG/R initiatives of partner countries.

Other regional organizations that have adopted policy documents in the area of SSG/R include the **African Union**, **ECOWAS**, and the **OECD**, which in 2007 was among first to develop comprehensive guidance outlining the key concepts, norms and principles of SSG/R.

There are also several nationally-based organizations focusing on SSG/R that operate globally, such as the **Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)** and the Swedish **Folke Bernadotte Academy**. Both are the OSCE's strategic partners that have contributed to developing both these internal set of Guidelines and various OSCE capacity-building activities on SSG/R.

Info Box 4



Key Multilateral Documents in the Field of SSG/R

- [Council of the EU: Concept for ESDP support to SSR](#) (2005)
- [EU Commission: Concept for European Community Support for SSR](#) (2006)
- [UN Security Council Presidential Statement](#) (2007)
- [OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform](#) (2007)
- [First UN Secretary-General Report](#) (2008)
- [UN Integrated Technical Guidance Notes on SSR](#) (2012)
- [African Union Policy Framework on SSR](#) (2013)
- [Second United Nations Secretary-General Report](#) (2013)
- [UN Security Council Resolution 2151](#) (2014)
- [EU-wide strategic framework to support SSR](#) (2016)
- [UN Integrated Technical Guidance Notes on Transnational Organized Crime and SSR](#) (2016)
- [ECOWAS Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform and Governance](#) (2018)
- [UN and World Bank Report “Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict”](#) (2018)
- [UN Security Council Resolution 2553](#) (2020)
- [World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020–2025](#) (2020)

31 E.g., the EU Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace, or The African Peace Facility.



6. Resources

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Available at: <https://www.unddr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Briefing-Note-for-Senior-Managers-on-the-IDDRS-2-FINAL.pdf>.
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