



Statement of H.E. Ambassador Mr. Thórdur Aegir Óskarsson, Special Envoy for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, Ministry for Foreign Affairs Iceland, at the Open Skies Conference of States Parties, Vienna, 6 July 2020.

Mr Co - Chair, dear Delegates,

Iceland has always been a persistent and firm supporter of the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Sadly we are witnessing continuous chipping away of this international regime, a trend that will only increase insecurity and unpredictability within the global community. Those states that in the past have provided leadership in establishing and implementing these arms control treaties and arrangements seem unable to continue that role.

This trend is the reason that we meet here to day in a Conference of the State Parties to the Open Skies Treaty to consider the effect of a notified withdrawal of one member to the treaty.

The long standing failure of the Russian Federation to fully implement the Open Skies Treaty is of major concern to Iceland.

It is also regrettable that the United States has come to the conclusion that the only reaction to this non-compliance is withdrawal from the Treaty.

The time is of essence and in that spirit we urge the Russian Federation to fulfill its treaty obligation and return to full compliance at the earliest date possible.

At the same time Iceland calls upon the United States, while fully understanding its position, to remain and work within the Treaty to find solutions to the outstanding non-compliance issues.

The Open Skies Treaty has since its entry into force almost 2 decades ago been an important contributor to the confidence and security building in the OSCE area by increasing military transparency and predictability, and thereby enhancing trust and mutual understanding.

There is still time with dedicated effort by all State Parties to preserve and even strengthen the Treaty and that should be the hallmark of the forthcoming review conference in October next.

The Open Skies Treaty must not become a victim of a faltering international arms control and disarmament architecture.