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**STATEMENT BY
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FEDERATION TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS ON MILITARY SECURITY
AND ARMS CONTROL, AT THE 1062nd PLENARY MEETING OF THE
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

15 November 2023

**Agenda item: Any other business
Subject: The Structured Dialogue**

Madam Chairperson,

The Russian delegation has listened carefully to the report summing up the activities of the Finnish Chairmanship of the Informal Working Group on the Structured Dialogue in the period 2022–2023 and would like to state the following.

It is our assessment that the Structured Dialogue format is in deep crisis. Contrary to the warped interpretations voiced today, the reasons for this state of affairs have nothing to do with the fact that the Russian Federation has pushed back firmly against the attempts by the United States of America and NATO to strengthen their security by creating unacceptable threats to our own country's national security.

As a result of the chronic inability of the participants in the Structured Dialogue to move away from a fruitless search for an answer to the question “who is to blame?” to a more productive joint discussion on “what should be done?”, the format has in recent years radically drifted away from its original objectives enshrined in the declaration of the 2016 OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Hamburg. NATO's Cold War logic – now translated into hardware on the battlefield – has hampered dialogue on “the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area to foster a greater understanding on these issues that could serve as a common solid basis for a way forward”.

To illustrate this point, allow us to give a few examples of how our colleagues reacted to the proposals by the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation to de-escalate the politico-military situation in Europe, which were raised by us within the framework of the Structured Dialogue.

We called upon them to enhance the mechanisms for preventing dangerous military incidents – their response was an almost 17-fold increase in strategic bomber flights in Europe.

We proposed that military exercise areas be moved deep into the interior of countries – in response, the Alliance conducted large-scale exercises on its eastern flank to address the use of nuclear weapons, based on scenarios involving a major military conflict with Russia.

Instead of heeding our appeal for the reduction of politico-military tensions, NATO increased the number of troops near Russia's borders tenfold. That process continues.

Moreover, it is also worth mentioning that, in the summer of 2021, the US delegation openly blocked the development of a code of conduct on transparency, risk reduction and incident prevention, which was supported by many participating States.

Unsurprisingly, over time, interest in the Structured Dialogue began to wane among our Western colleagues. It came to the point where, last year, the Polish OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office proposed that its functions be transferred to a completely different negotiation process. But that is another story.

Unfortunately, the past two years have also not brought anything new or useful to the format's work.

The Finnish Chairmanship's arbitrary decision has violated a key principle of the Structured Dialogue, according to which it is a State-driven process that is meant to be led by the 57 participating States. It was they who approved the "Hamburg mandate" of the Structured Dialogue, and it is on their shoulders that the task of determining the nature and trajectory of its development rests.

Nevertheless, as part of the witch-hunt initiated at the OSCE, our Finnish colleagues suspended the delegations of Russia and Belarus from participating in multilateral consultations. The question still remains open as to what the Finnish Chairmanship was guided by when it deliberately segregated participating States within the OSCE. Either their "overlord" ordered it or Finland, after joining NATO, became most enthusiastic about creating additional hotbeds of tension in terms of its relations with its geographical neighbours. Whatever the case, if someone thought to "punish" our two countries in this way, their plan failed. The real outcome of that move is the loss of channels of communication during a European security crisis. Colleagues, do not repeat your past mistakes.

Madam Chairperson,

As a lamentable outcome of the Finnish Chairmanship's activities, we see how a once valuable platform for professional contacts between politico-military experts from the capitals has turned into a private club of the "interest group" type. It now has nothing in common either with the Structured Dialogue or with the OSCE.

With respect to the development by our Finnish colleagues of an interactive information portal known as the "OSCE Toolbox", on the whole, we believe that efforts to preserve institutional memory are important. However, such efforts should conform to the "Hamburg mandate" and be depoliticized and undertaken in conjunction with meaningful initiatives to maintain European security. Otherwise, such ideas are no more than palliative measures.

In closing, I should like to share a few thoughts for the future. The Structured Dialogue is inseparable from the pan-European political process. Its development is possible solely on the basis of equality and mutual consideration of interests. If it eventually dawns on the Western elites that security on the continent is impossible without the security of Russia and its allies, then there may be a need for the Structured Dialogue as a Europe-wide platform for co-operation on politico-military issues. Otherwise,

when the time comes, instead of a Structured Dialogue, there will be direct dialogue through bilateral channels.

Thank you for your attention.