

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/277/23  
2 March 2023

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1413th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

2 March 2023

**In response to the report by the OSCE Secretary General on climate change issues**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Madam Secretary General,

We have taken note of the Secretary General's report on climate change issues and of the recommendations it contains for further steps in that field. We regret that the participating States were given so little time – two days in all – in which to study it. We shall share our initial observations.

It is our understanding that discussions on climate issues as such should be held in specialized bodies, with the involvement of experts who have the tools to develop long-term solutions conducive to sustainable development. The politicization of such discussions is inadmissible.

In that regard, the continued attempts by certain participating States and the OSCE Secretariat to consider the problem of climate change exclusively through the prism of security are categorically unacceptable. Such an approach is not backed up by convincing and exhaustive scientific data. Also problematic is the lack of universally accepted definitions of key concepts used in discussions on climate, such as "security", "conflict", "threat" and "stability". Moreover, the attempts to establish a direct link between climate change and security amount to a distortion of OSCE commitments.

We draw attention to the inadmissibility of using wording that does not reflect the opinions of all the participating States. Madam Secretary General, in violation of the documents defining your powers that have been agreed on collectively by the OSCE decision-making bodies, you took the liberty of speculating about some sort of "war against Ukraine". We regard this not only as an abuse of the Secretary General's mandate but also as a deliberate policy aimed at exacerbating existing divergences.

Adopted at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Stockholm in 2021, Decision No. 3/21 on addressing the challenges caused by climate change was of great importance in terms of defining the Organization's mandate in climate-related work. One of its key elements is a provision laying down the OSCE's complementary function in the global climate action process, where the central role is played by the United Nations – a complementary function that, what is more, rules out duplication of the work of other multilateral structures.

At the practical level, the participating States agreed, in the aforementioned decision, to intensify their dialogue and co-operation on tackling and minimizing the negative effects of climate change, and on adapting to these – in particular, in such long-standing areas under the OSCE’s second dimension as disaster risk reduction, water resources management and the protection of critical energy infrastructure.

We note that some work in these areas is being carried out under an extrabudgetary thematic project for countries in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

Having said that, we are baffled by the information presented on a seminar on climate change and security that was held under that project in Istanbul in November 2022 for representatives from 12 OSCE field operations and from OSCE executive structures. How can one speak of a “shared understanding” and the exchange of “best practices” when the Organization does not have a mandate in this field? We regard this as a distortion of agreed commitments and as the banal substitution of politicized sophistry for concrete actions. By the way, the fact that staff from the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media were among the participants in that event is evidently meant to invite the conclusion that everything is in order with the implementation by Ms. Teresa Ribeiro of her immediate tasks as laid down by her mandate, seeing that she ventured to share the “best practices” in combating climate change accumulated by the executive structure at whose helm she stands.

We shall comment briefly on the vision set out by the Secretary General for the main areas of work in the climate field this year and beyond.

We support the goal of stepping up dialogue and co-operation on climate change issues. We are open to a substantive discussion on ways of implementing the Stockholm Ministerial Council decision, not least as part of the high-level conference that is planned to take place under the auspices of the Secretary General. We look forward to a final decision on the dates on which it is to be held, and to receiving the agenda and details of the organizational modalities as soon as possible so that we can prepare thoroughly for the event.

The reflections on the implications of the “war against Ukraine” for climate security seem absurd, and the same is true of the attempts to extrapolate the situation in that country to global trends in climate co-operation. The “Ukrainization” of the OSCE’s work – whether in the climate field, in the second “basket” or in any other dimension – is causing the Organization’s mandate to sag, as it were, and it also means that the experience gained by the OSCE and its proficiencies are not being used as intended. There can be no doubt, though, that the OSCE’s services are in demand – one has only to glance at the list of events mentioned in the report under consideration.

We share the view that the development of regional co-operation in tackling transboundary problems can help to strengthen good-neighbourly relations and foster a climate of trust among the participating States.

We agree with the need for the intensification of efforts to establish and use early warning mechanisms so as to prevent and mitigate the possible negative impacts of climate change. We are willing to take part in joint actions in that area.

With regard to the Secretary General’s final recommendation, we are once again obliged to point out the inadmissibility of interpreting the provisions of Stockholm Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/21 broadly by linking climate and environmental protection to security. We strongly object to that.

In closing, we wish to emphasize that the OSCE's mandate in the climate field is defined clearly and unambiguously. In implementing it, the Secretary General, the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, and the OSCE executive structures and field operations must adhere strictly to the provisions agreed on by the participating States as set forth in decisions adopted by the decision-making bodies. The unsound practice of usurpation of authority by the Secretary General, who, in violation of her mandate, reflected today the opinion of a group of Western countries, rather than the consensus position of all the participating States, is detrimental to our Organization's future prospects.

As one of the recognized leaders in the international climate process in terms of its contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and its efforts related to universalization of the climate regime under the aegis of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, Russia would not want the "credit" built up in this field through joint efforts to be squandered in vain because of current political disagreements.

Thank you for your attention.