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United States Mission to the OSCE

Plenary Statement 29th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council Łódź, Poland, December 1, 2022

As delivered by Victoria Nuland,
Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

With due respect to our Belarusian colleague, there is a very clear way to stop this fire, to stop it today, and that is for Russia to stop its vicious war against Ukraine, its military attacks, but also now its vicious attacks on civilians, and for Belarus to cease to be an enabling platform for those vicious attacks.

That said, despite all the horrors of this year, we Americans are optimists. And I will leave Łódź today more optimistic than I arrived.

Why, you ask? Because just as Putin has failed to break Ukraine with his vicious invasion, with his war crimes and human rights abuses, and now his cruel attack on the most vulnerable young people and the elderly, plunging millions into cold and darkness, so too Putin and Russia have failed demonstrably to break the OSCE. On the contrary, this Organization, like the UN, has said “no” to Moscow's efforts to divide it, to paralyze it, to destroy it. It has said “no” to Moscow's attempt to abuse our aspirations for consensus, to make a choke collar or a deadly poison on this institution.

Rather, under the leadership of Foreign Minister Rau and Secretary General Helga Schmid, the OSCE has actually emerged from its torpor of the last few years even stronger, more flexible, more resilient. We created new tools and working methods to defend our common universal values, our security, our democratic institutions and human rights, wherever they are under threat—most importantly, with its new contributions in Ukraine and the Support Program for Ukraine. Also through the repeated use of the ironically named “Moscow Mechanism” and extra-budgetary forces to ensure the OSCE plays a role in defending infrastructure, in demining, in ensuring accountability, and in all that it is doing in its 13 Field Missions from Bosnia to Tajikistan.

This Organization—all you have to do is listen to the speeches last night and today—is more united than ever because we understand, based on what Russia has done, how fragile the values and institutions are that we have worked for, for so long, and how much we must ensure that we

protect and defend them and have an Organization that delivers and will continue to deliver for its citizens.

We are confident that North Macedonia will also continue under its Chairmanship to ensure that this organization delivers. And if Moscow wants to deal itself out of that, if it wants to set the global example of what abuse of the UN Charter looks like, whether it's at home or in its neighborhood or abroad, it can do that while the rest of us work to defend our citizens, defend the values, defend everything that we have built over the last almost 50 years.

And it's important not just for Europe, it's important for the world, because this Organization has set the gold standard for tools that we are now exporting to other continents to help solve conflicts, defend democracy, defend a free press, defend security, and ensure military transparency. And that needs to continue here, and it will, thanks to the resilience that we've created. But it also needs to continue around the world.

And maybe one day the benighted citizens of Russia itself will once again have the chance to live under a more free system—the system that Ukraine is fighting so hard for and that so many of the rest of us enjoy. A system where dignity is respected, where elections are free, where the press is free, where there is accountability and justice, where leaders work for the people and not the other way around.

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