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United States Mission to the OSCE
**U.S. Statement on the
Adoption of the FSC Agenda**

Arms Control Counselor Daniel Wartko
May 15, 2024

Mr. Chair.

I would like to join the others in expressing our very strong support for the work that the Chair has done, and to endorse the statements that our colleagues have made as we try to continue this dialogue, to try to make this a useful dialogue for all of us. We fully understand why Russia does not want to participate in dialogue here, when its arguments are repeatedly dismantled week-after-week by a chorus of voices because its arguments are so weak.

I'm very glad that we do have a student group here today. They are able to witness something extraordinary in an international forum, namely, one participant threatening everybody else: "Do it my way, or I will wreck it!"

Now, if somebody says, "Give me your car or I will wreck it!" and you don't give them your car, and then they wreck it. They have no right to say, "This is your fault that your car is wrecked because you didn't give it to me!"

And so it is the same here: Russia threatens, "Run the FSC my way, or else!"

But of course, we're not going to do it Russia's way. We're going to do it in the way that we've all agreed on doing it year-after-year, in order to have dialogue in this forum.

We do regret there the agenda was not adopted, because if we had held this dialogue today, I would have delivered the following statement:

It is important that we have this weekly FSC discussion to share our views, and to ensure that this forum remains an integral part of the political military structure in Europe.

Last week, we spoke about World War II's lingering effects on Europe and we also discussed the application of those lessons that we all learned from World War II to

Russia's war against Ukraine. The tension in this room rose as the Russian delegate threatened to attack anyone who would dare to defy Russia's attempt to subjugate its neighbor.

The next day, President Putin also invoked World War II on the occasion of Russia's celebration of Victory Day on May 9, when he made several statements directly relevant to our discussions here, which I'll quote:

He said, "We see how they [Russia's opponents] are trying to distort the truth about World War II – it interferes with those who are accustomed to building their essentially colonial policy on hypocrisy and lies." This is not the first time that we've about "neo-colonialism" from Russia.

But who exactly is trying to build a, "colonial policy on hypocrisy and lies?" It's Putin who has fabricated a historic right to the sovereign territory of Ukraine, invaded its neighbor, stolen its natural resources, taken its children, forced Ukrainians to flee for safety, and settled Russian citizens in occupied territory. You could hardly come up with a better textbook definition of "colonialism built on hypocrisy and lies."

Interestingly, Putin also stated, "We reject any state or alliance's claims to exceptionalism. We know what the exorbitance of such ambitions leads to." Now, we can agree with the sentiment, but which country exactly is claiming to be "exceptional"?

Just last week, we heard the Russian delegate tell us that foreign troops on Ukrainian territory would be an unallowable provocation that would draw an "insuperable" response from Russia.

So, listen to that again: Russia permits its own troops to be in Ukraine but forbids this for any other country. And, of course, Russia doesn't even acknowledge that there is a sovereign power – Ukraine – whose position on this issue is actually definitive. Is that not Russia claiming "exceptionalism" for itself?

It is precisely this mentality of Russian "exceptionalism" that is the root cause of this war.

The United States also unequivocally condemns Russia's irresponsible rhetoric and Belarus for recklessly participating in tactical nuclear exercises. While the United States has not seen any reason to adjust our own nuclear posture, nor any indications that Russia is preparing to actually use a nuclear weapon in Ukraine, we will continue to monitor Russia's actions closely.

Vladimir Putin, aided and abetted by Alexandr Lukashenka, is recklessly rattling the nuclear saber in an attempt to intimidate us from helping Ukraine defend its people, its territory, and its sovereignty from the Russian assault. We will not be intimidated.

So, while on one hand, Russia tries to intimidate us with threats, on the other it tries to distract us with administrative details. Here in this forum, the Russian delegate tries to chastise participating States about errors in technical reports – *reports that Russia itself does not provide* -- and laments that others are not adhering to OSCE commitments. This nitpicking does not distract us from the gravity of Russia’s responsibilities or its commitments as a nuclear weapons state. Nuclear weapons cannot be treated as toys, nor should they be wielded nonchalantly as levers in a political game. Nuclear weapons have the capability to end life as we know it on this planet for all humanity. A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

It is not “exceptionalism” to oppose nuclear blackmail, or to stand for freedom, or to support a government that reflects the will of its citizens. These values are, in fact, the norm of this organization, not the exception. The United States is proud to promote these values, and in solidarity with our friends and allies, we shall continue to support Ukraine as it defends its people and its sovereign territory from Russia’s aggression.

The United States believes it is important for the United States to share its view on Russia’s war against Ukraine and to listen to the positions of other delegations. We deeply appreciate the Chair’s efforts to continue the useful work of this body despite Russia’s attempt to obstruct our work.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.