



United States Mission to the OSCE

U.S. Statement for the Forum for Security and Cooperation: Closing Statement

As delivered by Ambassador Michael R. Carpenter
March 13, 2024

Thank you, Mr. Chair, thank you, dear Andreas,

Despite the near-constant obstructionism of the FSC's work by one particularly obstreperous participating State, you and your team have done a remarkable job this trimester of keeping the focus of this Forum where it should be – on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. I also commend your efforts to link this key issue to your security dialogues on Humanitarian Mine Action, International Humanitarian Law, Environment and Security, and of course the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.

It is indeed rather incredible that Russia, without any hint of irony, blocked the security dialogue on international humanitarian law. This is the second time that Russia has blocked a discussion of this topic. Both times, Russia hid behind the pretext that its proposed panelist had been passed over for consideration by the Chair, as if Russia had some special right to sit on every panel at the OSCE while it fails to pay its dues and is holding employees of this organization hostage. Incidentally but not surprisingly, both times, Russia's speakers were wholly unqualified to speak on the topic of international humanitarian law. And both times, we knew that Russia's demands were merely an excuse to block a session on a topic that is deeply uncomfortable for their delegation because they know that Russia is in breach of international humanitarian law.

Russia told the Chair on January 23 that it purportedly wants a "balanced, equidistant and open approach to all the participating States in the spirit of Article 2 of the United Nations Charter that anchors the principle of the sovereign equality of all States." This statement is absurd for at least three reasons. First, Russia has displayed zero respect for the equality of sovereign states for decades, seeking to carve out spheres of privileged interests for itself while ignoring the concerns of its neighbors. Second, the notion of a "equidistant position" is nonsensical when there is a clear aggressor and a victim, as is the case with Russia's brutal war of choice against Ukraine. Third, it would behoove the Russian Federation to actually read Article 2 of the UN Charter in its entirety, including the part that says, "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state."

Mr. Chair,

Clearly what Russia wants here is for us to discuss procedural details. Given that the UN Charter is being violated by the Russian Federation every day, I can see why Russia would

ENGLISH only

like us to be focused on mundane details like who sits on a particular panel or on the wording of the subjects of our political dialogues. I get it. But we need to rise above this and look at the big picture. Preventing war. Ending Conflict. Stopping human suffering. That's what this forum is intended for.

In closing, Chair, I would like to thank both Canada (Jocelyn) and Croatia (Mario) for their enduring support to the Chair as members of the troika. I am also pleased to welcome Denmark as the troika's newest member. Welcome to the FSC leadership. And, while I will be departing Vienna soon to return to Washington, I look forward to updates on this Forum's discussions from my excellent Arms Control Delegation. I will be with you in spirit. And as long as delegations here continue to keep their focus on the guiding principles of this organization, we will be in good hands. Thank you for your leadership, Andreas.

###