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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE
OSCE, AT THE 74th JOINT MEETING OF THE OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY
CO-OPERATION AND THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

29 May 2019

Distinguished Chairpersons,

First of all, we should like to thank the distinguished Permanent Representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Jeroen Boender, for preparing and publishing the report on the outcome of the meetings of the Informal Working Group on the Structured Dialogue held on 6 and 7 May. It proved to be a good-quality document.

The recent meetings have, in our opinion, been useful. On the whole, the thematic focus of the discussions has been on questions that logically deserve priority attention in the difficult politico-military situation in the Euro-Atlantic region – de-escalation, reduction of military confrontation and restoration of military relations. A number of proposals have also been made, some of which require further analysis – in particular ideas for elaborating a Code of Conduct on transparency, risk reduction and the prevention and management of military incidents.

Dialogue is possible only on a basis of equality and mutual consideration of countries' interests. Its aim should be to find ways of restoring trust and reducing the level of confrontation in the OSCE area. Given that the present situation in our Organization's area of responsibility is something of concern to all OSCE participating States, it is logical to focus not on mutual accusations but on the painstaking work of de-escalating the situation, including reducing military activity on a reciprocal basis along the borders of Russia and the NATO countries and also improving mechanisms for preventing incidents and dangerous military activities. Under the circumstances today, this last element is likely to deserve particular attention, helping to develop trust and experience of joint activities and, most importantly, producing tangible results.

For the time being, we see that some States are not fully prepared to proceed to an objective search for practical measures to de-escalate tensions. We note their persistent efforts to point out those responsible for the crisis in European security and the reluctance to turn attention to their own countries; we hear appeals by a number of countries "not to forget the main reasons why the OSCE was effectively forced to engage in the Structured Dialogue".

For us, the main problem underlying the present crisis of confidence is obvious, namely the choice of a "closed" security architecture rather than the development of pan-European institutions, and the disregard for the principle of the indivisibility of security. As long ago as 1990, the Charter of Paris envisaged the task

of building a unified, free and peaceful Europe. However, NATO decided that this should be done by expanding its ranks, claiming that this expansion would supposedly improve the security of all. And what about essential aspects of the OSCE's founding documents such as the indivisibility of security, countries refraining from strengthening their own security at the expense of the security of others, and not allowing States or groups of States to take pre-emptive responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in the OSCE area?

Let me remind you as well that the initiative to scale down military contacts did not come from our country. The existing mechanisms, the whole point of which was to maintain permanent contacts under any circumstances and in the presence of disagreements, were discontinued at the insistence of a number of countries.

In that connection, I should like to draw attention to the Open Address by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the NATO Member States to strengthen mutual trust and develop co-operation. It was also distributed here in the OSCE. Its content is readily understandable and consists of simple and at the same time effective proposals: promoting dialogue between the two organizations, creating a mechanism to prevent dangerous military incidents, and building confidence by holding regular briefings and inviting observers on a reciprocal basis to CSTO and NATO exercises. All of these practical questions are also being discussed within our organizational structure, which underscores their relevance even further.

As participants in the Structured Dialogue under the aegis of the OSCE, we cannot but mention the wider politico-military realities in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions. Unfortunately, they are not reassuring. Under these circumstances, the Structured Dialogue is valuable as a platform for fact-based expert discussion and as an opportunity for consideration by military practitioners of ways of devising concrete measures to reduce military danger. We urge that these efforts be continued within the framework of the Structured Dialogue.

Thank you for your attention.