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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MS. IULIA ZHDANOVA, ACTING HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS ON MILITARY
SECURITY AND ARMS CONTROL, AT THE 1091st PLENARY MEETING OF
THE OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

6 November 2024

**On the discussion of the agenda for the 1091st Plenary Meeting of the
OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation**

On the basis of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE, the delegation of the Russian Federation confirms the lack of consensus with regard to adopting the agenda for the 1091st Plenary Meeting of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC). In these circumstances, the Chairperson should, after reaffirming his or her commitment to the Rules of Procedure and to the consensus principle, close the meeting and duly record this fact in the journal of the day. It is only on this basis that the Chairperson will be able to proceed with the adoption of the agenda and the opening of the next meeting, the 1092nd Plenary Meeting of the FSC, thereby realizing the goal that he set at the beginning of the current round of negotiations, namely to “gather around the same table as a rule on a weekly basis for consultation, goal-oriented dialogue and co-operation in the field of security, even in times of profound disagreement”.

We are obliged to note that, over the past few weeks, an unprecedented crisis situation has developed at the FSC, and the future not only of this platform but also, without exaggeration, of the OSCE as a whole depends on the outcome of the search for a way out of this situation. What we are referring to is an attempt by the Danish Chairmanship, for the first time in the history of the FSC, to circumvent the consensus principle at the core of the pan-European platform’s activities, which could provoke a most serious institutional crisis.

For many years, the Russian Federation has done everything possible to preserve the original spirit of the FSC, including the development of consultation, goal-oriented continuing dialogue and co-operation for the purpose of forming common approaches to security. However, our current opponents preferred a NATO-centric security system, have been hampering the negotiation process within the Forum for years and, in the recent period, have made the Forum a hostage to their anti-Russian policy, attempting to turn it from a platform for equal dialogue into an arena for demonizing one of the key participating States. At the same time, they have tried to intimidate us with slogans like “No business as usual”, apparently on the assumption that Russia needs the FSC more than the Western participating States do.

That is not the case. And while to begin with we attempted to persuade our opponents that the interests of all participating States must be taken into account so as to preserve the Forum’s viability, later

we became convinced that they were not going to listen to us. In essence, the FSC has been taken hostage by those who are trying to make it a tool in the fight against Russia. Consequently, we were obliged to switch to blocking a number of meetings as a response to violations of the Forum's mandate, discrimination against Russian panellists and representatives of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and attempts to otherwise infringe upon our country's interests. Today, we ourselves are saying "No business as usual" to the countries that abuse their function as Chairperson of the Forum and to those who support and encourage these abuses.

We must stress that, for the Russian Federation, the blocking of meetings is not an end in itself. We are exercising our legitimate right as a participating State to agree or disagree with the agenda proposed by the Chairperson and with his methods of work, and in doing so we are acting strictly in accordance with the established procedures. We expect the same from the Chairmanships. In order to preserve the Forum, they must observe and respect its mandate and the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE and perform their duties under that document.

If we take a look at the actions of a number of FSC Chairmanships in recent times, we see a lot of violations of the documents defining the Forum's mandate and of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE, and a lot of cases where the Chairperson failed to fulfil his commitments. For example, the politico-military events in the annual cycle have not been convened for two years now. When drawing up the programme of work for the latest session, consultations were not held in advance with the participating States Parties (at least, not with Russia) or the results of such consultations were ignored. The programme of work included topics that fall outside the FSC's area of competence. When the lists of panellists were drawn up, we were not asked to put forward candidates or our suggestions were ignored, with the result that the views of only a few participating States were reflected in the presentations by invited speakers.

Let us take a look from this point of view at the FSC meeting on 9 October, more precisely at the Security Dialogue on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. Formally, both this agenda item and the Chairperson's concept note were consistent with the provisions of the Code of Conduct, therefore we did not object to its being held. However, the Chairperson concealed the list of panellists until the last minute, and during the meeting he failed to ensure that one of the reports (the presentation by the representative of the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine) was in line with both the content of his own concept note and the spirit of the FSC, about which our opponents have been arguing so much. Instead of reporting on what the Ukrainian armed forces are doing to inform military personnel about their responsibility for violations of international humanitarian law and to ensure the responsibility of commanders and superiors at all levels, he launched into unacceptable and outrageous speculations about some kind of kangaroo court for Russia and its leadership, all the while using the language of hostility and hatred. When we drew the Chairperson's attention to the inadmissibility of such behaviour by a panellist invited by him (and the Chairperson, by inviting speakers, assumes responsibility for their compliance with the rules established at the Forum), he actually started defending him. The basic principles of the Chairmanship – impartiality, accountability to the participating States and consideration of their opinions, transparency, strict adherence to the FSC's mandate and the Rules of Procedure – were thus violated.

We would point out that, during the Russian Chairmanship of the FSC, our representatives took an extremely sensitive approach to the fulfilment of their duties, not combining the functions of the Chairperson and a national delegation, holding consultations with the participating States and taking into account their proposals and wishes. In particular, at the start of our Chairmanship, the delegation of the European Union urged us "to discuss disagreements and to co-operate if and when our interests overlap" (FSC.DEL/125/17). The delegation's statement at the end of the Russian Chairmanship (FSC.DEL/200/17), which was described as "successful", shows that we had fulfilled our tasks at that time without detriment to anyone.

Let us return to the current situation. Since the Danish Chairmanship has ignored the comments of a participating State and refuses to take them into account in its activities, we are left with only one possibility for reacting to its behaviour, fighting against the distortion of the FSC's work and bringing this work back to its originally defined framework – and that is to signal the unacceptability of the Chairperson's actions by blocking the adoption of the agenda for the 1091st meeting.

However, the Danish Chairmanship, supported by two dozen delegations, continued to insist on its own infallibility and, what is more, attempted to call into question, and in fact violate, the consensus principle on which not only the FSC but also the entire OSCE is based. Telling in this regard are the demands of one delegation (sitting in this room on a side chair, by the way) to follow the “broad agreement” of the “overwhelming majority” and, despite the absence of a unanimous decision, to continue to conduct the business of the meeting. It should be recalled that the Forum is not a village assembly where issues are decided by a majority vote, nor is it an EU body where Brussels bureaucrats have so far managed to push through the decisions they want – in defiance of the opinion of individual sovereign States. Its work is governed by very clear rules, not by someone's “own opinions”, momentary whims, the desire to “take revenge on Russia” and other chimeras that have nothing to do with procedural aspects.

Everything that is happening is a clear indication that the Chairperson has exceeded his authority. We are obliged to remind you that the FSC Chairperson is a technical moderator, not a political arbitrator, and his or her tasks are strictly limited by the Rules of Procedure. It is specifically stated in this respect that the FSC Chairmanship shall be responsible “on behalf of the FSC” (which means on behalf of all 57 participating States without exception!) “for co-ordination of and consultation on current FSC business” (paragraph III.4 of the Rules of Procedure). In performing its duties, the FSC Chairmanship is called upon to act in accordance with OSCE decisions, including, of course, the Rules of Procedure (paragraph III.5). It is in this vein that the Chairperson should ensure the good order and smooth running of meetings (paragraph IV.1(C)5). Documents issued by the Chairperson (and likewise by executive structures, in particular the Secretariat) shall not be regarded as OSCE documents (paragraph II(A)4) and are therefore not binding. This also applies to any kind of interpretations, conclusions, recommendations and so on emanating from the Chairmanship. In short, these are purely technical tasks in support of dialogue – on behalf of and for the participating States. However, the Chairmanship's appropriation of any authority not provided for in the Rules of Procedure calls its status into question.

Let me now turn to the procedural and legal aspects of the conduct of our meetings.

First of all, the Helsinki Document 1992 and subsequent OSCE Ministerial Council decisions mentioned by the Chairmanship and a number of delegations are of a general nature, defining the structures of the Organization's bodies and their mandate. They are not directly applicable documents with regard to the procedure for the conduct of plenary meetings. Purely procedural matters are governed by the Rules of Procedure, as adopted on 1 November 2006. In case of contradiction with OSCE decisions adopted earlier, the Rules of Procedure shall take precedence, as is made very clear in paragraph VII.1 thereof.

Secondly, we have repeatedly pointed out that FSC meetings take place, “as a rule”, once a week (paragraph IV.2(C)1). This consequently also implies the possibility of the exceptions that we mentioned earlier.

Thirdly, the agenda in its entirety, including the “standing” items mentioned in paragraph IV.1(C)1 and other items as appropriate, shall be adopted in full by the Forum at the beginning of the meeting (paragraph IV.1(C)2). Since the FSC is a decision-making body (paragraph II(B)7), such adoption takes place in the absence of “any” objection expressed by a participating State. In other words, the Rules of Procedure do not require the participating State to argue its objection.

Fourthly, unlike the Chairmanship of the OSCE Permanent Council, the Chairperson of the FSC does not have the authority to decide on the agenda “as appropriate” (paragraphs VI.1(C)3 and VI.1(C)4). If there is no consensus regarding the adoption of the entire agenda, it is deemed not to have been adopted and, consequently, the continuation of the meeting is impossible and it must be closed. This is exactly what the FSC Chairmanships of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia and Cyprus did in 2023 and 2024, referring, among other things, to the consensus principle and the provisions of the Rules of Procedure, as reflected in the journals of several FSC meetings (FSC.JOUR/1046, FSC.JOUR/1063, FSC.JOUR/1069, FSC.JOUR/1075, FSC.JOUR/1083, FSC.JOUR/1084, FSC.JOUR/1086, FSC.JOUR/1087, FSC.JOUR/1088).

In order to return the Forum to normal work, which is what the Danish Chairmanship implies with “continuing dialogue and consultation even in times of crisis”, the Chairmanship must observe and respect the Forum’s mandate and the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE and perform its duties under that document. Attempts to call into question, circumvent or violate the consensus principle threaten the viability not only of the FSC as an autonomous decision-making body, but also of the Organization as a whole. Everyone should be very clear about this.

Looking to the future, we believe it is necessary to draw attention to the following. If future FSC Chairmanships intend to strictly observe fundamental principles and norms, to work together in a mutually respectful manner and to take into account the legitimate interests of all participating States without exception, including the Russian Federation, then there will be no need for us to use procedural leverage.