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**STATEMENT BY
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FEDERATION TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS ON MILITARY SECURITY
AND ARMS CONTROL, AT THE 1023rd PLENARY MEETING OF
THE OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO OPERATION**

28 September 2022

**Agenda item: Security Dialogue
Subject: Debunking the myths in connection with the women, peace
and security agenda**

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the Belgian Foreign Minister, Ms. Hadja Lahbib, and thank her for her detailed report. We listened carefully to the panellists' presentations reflecting their national approaches to advancing the women, peace and security agenda.

The OSCE, as the largest regional structure, contributes within the framework of its mandate to the promotion of gender equality wherever it can. We have repeatedly emphasized that achieving such equality is an important goal, but its implementation – both within the Organization and in the participating States – should not focus on figures alone. Priority should be given to the skills, knowledge and experience of both women and men. In other words, it is the competencies of the individual that are of importance for efforts aimed at strengthening security. The Russian Federation has consistently adhered to this approach.

In line with the theme of the meeting, we should like to present our view of the myths in connection with the women, peace and security agenda.

First of all, there is no doubt that United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 and the nine follow-up resolutions are important in terms of improving the situation of women in armed conflict and post-conflict reconstruction. However, the co-ordinating role in dealing with the tasks laid down by these resolutions continues to rest with the United Nations. The thematic scope of these instruments hardly overlaps with the existing OSCE commitments approved by all participating States. Hence, our common imperative priority is to respect the agreed mandate of the Organization without attempting to impose non-consensus approaches.

Secondly, current political practice shows that, unfortunately, there is no direct automatic correlation between increasing the number of women who occupy senior military and political posts in Europe and improving the quality of security on the continent. The familiar phrase from the United Nations, whereby

women's participation in negotiations on a peaceful settlement is decisive for the longevity and sustainability of the agreements in question, seems to be becoming a thing of the past. In today's politico-military environment, hawkish squawking, bravado about being ready to use nuclear weapons if necessary and calls for victory "on the battlefield" are becoming increasingly fashionable among women in positions of power. Female politicians in Europe are openly stating that they put their personal ambitions ahead of the interests of their constituents. Obviously, this is not what the founders of the women, peace and security agenda at the United Nations were aiming at. It would seem that it is time for the agenda's proponents to stop and reflect.

The third myth concerns the usefulness of placing non-core topics on the agenda of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC). The position of the Russian Federation on the weaving of gender equality issues into the "fabric" of the Forum is well known: these issues have no bearing whatsoever on the politico-military situation in Europe. For many years, we have been urging our colleagues to focus the FSC's efforts on the truly important security issues and to discuss ways of resolving them. But all to no avail. The current state of affairs in the field of European security came about because of the idle inaction of participating States and a shift in focus to topics that can serve only auxiliary functions within the OSCE's politico-military "basket".

We are convinced that the attempts to turn the FSC into a club for debating on special interests are leading to its debasement. The date 22 September this year marked the 30th anniversary of the first meeting of the Forum, but for some reason today the participating States are discussing the equal status of women and men in the armed forces, rather than ways of strengthening the politico-military foundations of our autonomous decision-making body. In our view, such an approach is unlikely to bring added value to the FSC's work.

Mr. Chairperson,

We are disappointed by the fact that the Belgian Chairmanship is once again authorizing the use of non-consensus anti-Russian language by invited panellists. How about the Chairmanship allowing the voices of the women of Donbas, who have been living under the Kyiv regime's shelling since 2014, to be heard at the FSC so as to provide a balance? We anticipate that our colleagues will strongly object to this. An entirely legitimate question then arises: how does such a selective approach fit in with the implementation in good faith of resolution 1325, when the Chairmanship and the participating States turn a blind eye to the situation of the women in Donbas?

This leads us to the debunking of the fourth and most important myth – no international or regional organization will be able to make a proper contribution to the advancement of the women, peace and security agenda while women representing geographical regions regarded as "undesirable" by some States are denied free expression and the right to life. The Russian Federation is doing its utmost to change this state of affairs.

Today we have heard groundless accusations against Russian military personnel who are fulfilling their duty within the framework of the special military operation. We firmly reject these insulting and unfounded slurs. We consider them to be part of an unscrupulous information war against our country. Compliance with international humanitarian law has unconditional priority for the Russian army.

We remind those present of the cover-up of real cases of crimes committed by Ukrainian military personnel and radicals against the Russian-speaking female inhabitants of Donbas and Ukraine since 2014. Here are just a few examples.

On 27 July 2014, the Ukrainian army launched an artillery strike using Grad rocket systems on the peaceful city of Horlivka [or Gorlovka in Russian]. Kristina Zhuk, aged 23, and her ten-month-old daughter Kira were among the 13 people killed there. Photographs of Kristina lying dead on the grass in a city park, still clutching her daughter, were circulated around the world. She is remembered as the “Madonna of Gorlovka” to this day.

In the summer of 2015, a scandal erupted in Ukraine around the nationalist Tornado battalion. Its fighters were accused by the Ukrainian authorities of committing grave crimes – looting, torture, violence against men and women, paedophilia, and the abduction and murder of Ukrainian civilians. Many of the perpetrators were then prosecuted, including battalion commander Ruslan Onyshchenko. In March of this year, however, all these criminals were granted amnesty by President Zelenskyy.

On 15 May 2020, Ukrainian military personnel from the 128th Mountain Assault Brigade of the Ukrainian armed forces were involved in a barbarous act in Donbas. They offered to take a woman across the demarcation line in exchange for money. However, while moving through Ukrainian positions, the woman stepped on a PMN-2 anti-personnel mine. Her left foot was torn off. The subsequent actions by the Ukrainian military personnel were monstrous – in order to shift the blame for the incident on to the people’s militia of the Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR), they began to photograph the injured woman, blindfolding her and bandaging the stump of her leg with a dirty rag.

On 7 March 2022, near the Kommunar coal mine, DPR military personnel who had arrived to demine the territory discovered a grave containing the bodies of four women. A forensic examination revealed that the women had been tortured and raped before their death. One of the victims was pregnant. A detachment from the Aidar nationalist battalion was based in the area.

On 28 March, Nazis from the Azov battalion tortured a young woman to death in the building of school No. 18 in Mariupol. Her mutilated body with the hands hacked off and a swastika burned into her stomach shocked all who saw it.

On 21 March, Roma women who had fled to western Ukraine were subjected to abuse by nationalists – they were stripped, doused with green paint and tied to a pole after having been accused of looting.

On 3 April, in the centre of the city of Pavlohrad in the Dnipropetrovsk region, members of territorial defence units stripped a local woman half naked and tied her to a pole. Police officers who observed the incident did not intervene.

On 12 April, the police themselves publicly thrashed a woman, who was tied to a pole and humiliated further by her nakedness, with a cane. The monstrous practice of public violent punishment, reminiscent of witch-hunts during the Middle Ages, has become a commonplace in Ukraine.

These facts are publicly accessible and anyone can study them.

We call on the collective West to demonstrate through actions its commitment to United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 and the nine follow-up resolutions and to end the practice, which runs counter to the spirit and the letter of these resolutions, of suppressing evidence of crimes against women.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.