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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MS. IULIA ZHDANOVA, MEMBER OF THE DELEGATION OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS ON MILITARY
SECURITY AND ARMS CONTROL, AT THE 1078th PLENARY MEETING OF
THE OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

22 May 2024

**On the adoption of the agenda for the 1078th Plenary Meeting of the
OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation**

Mr. Chairperson,

For the second year in a row at the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), the rotating Chairmanships and representatives of the collective West who are influencing their activities continue to pursue an unrelenting course aimed at undermining the legitimate interests of the Russian Federation as an OSCE participating State that stood at the cradle of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act when it was drafted and signed.

For the benefit of those present, I recall that since the start of 2023 we have received a total of five rejections in response to our proposals for arranging for high-ranking representatives of Russia and the Eurasian security organization – that is, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) – to speak at the FSC.

On 22 March 2023, the Chairmanship of Bosnia and Herzegovina took the decision not to invite an official from the CSTO Secretariat to participate in a discussion on the topic of “Regional mechanisms for building trust” under the Security Dialogue agenda item. That was the first egregious instance in the OSCE’s history where, in violation of the Platform for Co-operative Security adopted at the Istanbul Summit in 1999, the CSTO was barred from a meeting of an autonomous decision-making body.

On 4 October 2023, the Canadian Chairmanship refused to include Ambassador-at-Large Rodion Miroshnik from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the list of keynote speakers due to speak on the topic of international humanitarian law under the Security Dialogue agenda item.

On 7 February 2024, the Cypriot Chairmanship reacted negatively to our proposal to invite the Deputy Director of the Department for Non-Proliferation and Arms Control at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Anton Mazur, who for almost a decade headed our delegation here, to outline Russia’s position on international humanitarian law under the Security Dialogue agenda item.

Despite the aforementioned instances, highly destructive as they were for inter-State relations in Europe, we continued to remain faithful to the objectives of strengthening dialogue at the FSC. In this connection we decided to show some flexibility and put forward a proposal for having Russian representatives speak not as keynote speakers but in a national capacity, which has been normal practice at this politico-military platform for many years.

Nevertheless, on 15 May 2024, the Croatian Chairmanship turned down, under spurious pretexts, our request for Ambassador-at-Large Miroshnik from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to receive an invitation, and today, on 22 May 2024, as a result of our Croatian colleagues' obstructionist attitude, a prominent expert on Eurasian security, Sergey Markedonov, who is a researcher at the Institute for International Studies of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will not be able to join us from Moscow via videoconference.

Not included in this enumeration, which is already extensive as it is, are the arrogant refusal by several Chairmanships to take account of our country's views when drawing up the FSC's programme of work, their use of non-consensus wording, and the thumbs down given by the Croatian representatives when it came to having Russian students join the 1077th Plenary Meeting via Zoom on a one-off basis. We consider such attempts to make students pay the price of political squabbles to be a sign of weakness on the part of the FSC Chairmanship.

This raises the reasonable question: so who is it, then, who is actually undermining the Forum's work? Who is propagating the Orwellian principle that "all are equal, but some are more equal than others"? Who is thereby bringing about the rapid marginalization of this autonomous OSCE decision-making body? It would seem that instead of construction and dialogue, you, Mr. Chairperson, and your predecessors have consciously opted for fragmentation and destruction.

Mr. Chairperson,

In view of the circumstances that have been set forth, the delegation of the Russian Federation is informing you about the lack of consensus on the agenda for the 1078th Plenary Meeting of the FSC.

We believe that we have a right to demand that the Croatian Chairmanship and all subsequent Chairmanships of the Forum preserve even-handedness as far as possible and that they act for all 57 participating States. We also have every reason to expect actions from them that are aimed at ironing out the existing differences between delegations. We confirm that, should there be a repetition of discriminatory actions – actions that are therefore contrary to the Charter of the United Nations – against our country, we will take proportionate countermeasures until a balance of rights among the OSCE participating States has been restored.

Anticipating the statements that we will hear in response from our Western partners and their like-minded associates, we should like to state the following.

No, the Russian delegation is not trying to test the limits of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE. Today, in strict compliance with paragraph IV.1(C)4, we have informed the representatives of OSCE participating States that the FSC will not be able to agree upon the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. Consensus is not only a tool for ensuring considered decisions that have been worked out taking into account the views of all participating States without exception that are involved in the negotiation process, but also a legitimate mechanism for preventing unilateral actions that introduce imbalances in the Organization's work. So, no, the Russian delegation is not weaponizing the consensus principle.

Yes, according to paragraph IV.2(C)1 of the Rules of Procedure, plenary meetings of the FSC are, as a rule, meant to take place weekly. An exception to this rule arises, unfortunately, when the OSCE participating State that is exercising, on a rotating basis, the functions of the FSC Chairmanship refuses, in violation of paragraph IV.1(C)5 of the Rules of Procedure, to ensure that this autonomous decision-making body can work efficiently and thoughtfully on the basis of the principles of impartiality and maximum consideration for the views of all delegations.

Yes, the Forum was conceived by its founders as the main and, in fact, the only pan-European entity responsible for politico-military stability in Europe. Specifically, in Chapter V, paragraph 15, of the Helsinki Document 1992, the OSCE participating States did indeed commit themselves to “develop[ing] consultation, goal-oriented continuing dialogue and co-operation in the field of security”.

However, that important role of the FSC has been lost over time. Careful analysis of the rotating Chairmanships’ actions during the period 2023–2024 awakens justifiable grave concerns over the future course of discussions on pan-European security matters. This body has turned into a platform for underhand dealings by Western delegations that are trying to establish a kind of “new normal” here, the essence of which consists in arbitrarily excluding specific participating States from the consultation process and blocking the holding of politico-military events in the OSCE’s annual cycle, with all this being done behind closed doors. Moreover, it is telling that, in public, when the microphones are on as it were, not one delegation has spoken out against the holding of these events over the past two years. The arguments that our interlocutors can draw upon are evidently too flimsy. That is why we are acting far more honestly here by openly stating our position.

Mr. Chairperson,

Future Chairmanships of the Forum, and likewise the Western delegations influencing their activities, must realize the utter futility of attempts to tinker with mechanisms originally designed to safeguard politico-military security in Europe on the basis of co-operation with the idea of using them for such tasks as pursuing confrontation with Russia and seeking to isolate our country.

The Russian Federation has always supported efforts to reach consensus and organize constructive work. We are not renouncing such efforts even now. The ball is in the court of the rotating FSC Chairmanships, and it is on them that the Forum’s future fate depends.

Thank you for your attention.