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PC.DEL/1248/23/Corr.1
26 September 2023

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1443rd (REINFORCED) MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 September 2023

Minister,

Let us be frank: the state of affairs at the OSCE gives cause for serious concern. The Organization is in effect living on the cusp of survival. Initiated by the Polish Chairmanship last year, the baleful practice of freezing entire areas of work has already considerably undermined the scope for carrying out the OSCE's mandated tasks. Unfortunately, this year we have not seen any tangible steps taken by North Macedonia to rectify the situation. On the contrary, the crisis has been exacerbated even further and is affecting the very foundations of the OSCE.

The ongoing destruction of the Organization is due to the destructive behaviour of the previous and current Chairmanships, supported by a number of Western States, which manifests itself in being neither ready nor willing to forge a consensus. We completely reject the accusations that our country is "blocking all the work". We would remind you that bridging the gaps between participating States' positions and a search for compromises have always been at the heart of the efforts of the Chairmanship-in-Office as one of the key systemic elements intended to shape a unifying agenda. At present, though, a different situation pertains: some countries fancy themselves "sole owners" of the OSCE and are trying to impose their opinion on everyone else. Why has the current Chairmanship refused to hold broad-based consultations on all complex issues? Why are different options for tackling acute problems not proposed, instead of merely those options that suit the "Western monopoly"? And where will this policy ultimately lead to?

If the Chairmanship and the Western participating States want to prevent further disintegration of the Organization, they must at the very least not allow the negative precedent of the Ministerial Council meeting held in Łódź in 2022 to repeat itself. All those who are interested in normalization of the OSCE's work must facilitate the holding of a fully fledged Ministerial Council meeting; they must help to put right the mistakes made by the Polish Chairmanship last year. The Ministerial Council meeting must take place in the way that has been customary throughout all these years of the OSCE's existence, that is, according to the precepts of civilized society and diplomacy.

We trust that the Chairmanship will take exhaustive measures to ensure that representatives of all the participating States without exception can come to the meeting and, what is more, with the participating States themselves choosing the political level of their participation, the make-up of their delegations and the travel route to be used. Without any discrimination in terms of entry and transit arrangements, ad hoc flights

and so on. There exist legal opportunities to make that possible. Everyone knows perfectly well that even the European Union's "sanctions regulations" include exemptions for holding international events.

Moving on now to the issue of the 2024 Chairmanship. There are just three months left until the end of this year. We find it difficult to understand why, over the course of the year, our colleagues from North Macedonia have not deigned to occupy themselves in a substantive manner with this key issue for the OSCE's work. Why did they not initiate consultations well in advance on a full range of candidates for the Chairmanship? If the plan was to artificially create time pressure in the run-up to the Ministerial Council meeting in December and to try to ram through the decision that a certain group of countries wants, nothing will come of that. Russian representatives at all levels – from experts all the way to the Minister for Foreign Affairs – have repeatedly spoken of Estonia's candidature being unacceptable. It did not attract consensus back in 2021, nor will it do so now. We are ready to consider alternative candidates, but not from among the ranks of NATO member countries. Why? Because in the current unprecedented politico-military crisis in the OSCE area – provoked, as it happens, by the North Atlantic Alliance's aggressive expansionist policy – all members of the bloc, which is waging a proxy war against the Russian Federation, are in effect merely conduits for the interests of their North American overlord. The OSCE will not make it through a further successive year with a NATO country at the helm.

Without any justification, the OSCE Chairmanship of North Macedonia has also dragged out the issue of selecting the heads of the principal executive structures. I would remind you that, when approving the current line-up of senior officials at the Ministerial Council meeting in Tirana in 2020, Russia made a series of interpretative statements demanding that the appointees strictly fulfil OSCE principles, obligations and decisions and, likewise, that they adhere to the mandates of the executive structures in question. Unfortunately, that has not been the case. We therefore officially declare that the current Secretary General, Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and Representative on Freedom of the Media must be replaced by new people who are able to go about their work in a professional manner, without political bias and in full compliance with the existing mandates. The sooner the competition for these posts is launched, the better it will be for our Organization's business continuity. The Chairmanship's failure to do this in good time is no excuse for any kind of "technical extension".

And one final point, though by no means a less important one. The Unified Budget for this year could have been adopted back in July. Its financial parameters were agreed on two months ago. And it was only thanks to the Russian Federation's unprecedented flexibility that it proved possible to make such headway in the discussions on the budget.

Under the political pressure of Western participating States, the Chairmanship requested an unwarranted cost increase for the OSCE field operations in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Moldova. It was not easy to accept such an unreasonable proposal, but even so we agreed to an increase in funding on the understanding that Russia's comments on the wording about programmatic activities in some sections of the budget proposal would be taken into account.

Nevertheless, September is already drawing to a close and still there is no decision on the budget. And the only thing that is preventing its adoption is the non-consensus programmatic "narrative". The inclusion of such a "narrative" in the text of the budget document was in gross violation of Permanent Council Decision No. 486 (2002), where it is clearly stated that the substantive part of programmes must correspond to adopted mandates and agreed documents of the Organization.

As we can see, a number of Western States, along with representatives of the Kyiv regime, are trying to turn a blind eye to this violation, pretending that it somehow never happened. They are engaging in blatant insinuations, accusing Russia of blocking the budget and other financial matters at the OSCE. Russia

is not blocking anything. We always propose a pragmatic way out of a situation – a way that makes it possible for any decision to be adopted, albeit not on terms dictated by the Russophobic “wing”, but, rather, taking the interests of all participants into consideration. After all, that is how the consensus rule works.

It is telling that, when it came to appointing the External Auditor and funding an election observation mission in the Republic of Moldova, a solution could be found precisely on a mutually acceptable basis. Decisions were taken, even if they were not quite what some participating States wanted them to look like. But it was the result of compromise, which is perfectly normal in OSCE practice. Such a result is seen as abnormal only by those who are convinced of their exceptionalism and believe that they can ignore the opinions of everyone else.

These cases highlight how, on matters related to the OSCE’s financial activities, we never block anything, we never say: “Absolutely not!” As it happens, such phrases may often be heard from those who quite unfairly accuse our country of being guilty of practically everything. However, it is they who are blocking the decisions on which there is as yet no consensus. They are blocking them for political reasons, refusing to regard Russia as an equal participant in the discussions on the budget, a participant with its own interests and with the right not to agree with its opponents.

So, returning to the Unified Budget for 2023, we must point out that it could be adopted at any moment. It is just necessary to bring the programmatic “narrative” into line with the rules and norms established by the Permanent Council. We will not tolerate any violation of these. Unless the requirements underpinning the budget process are met, there can be no question of the budget itself being adopted.

Now, if anyone thinks that, by not allowing the non-consensus programmatic “narrative” to be removed, they can harm Russia, then they are profoundly mistaken. It is only the OSCE itself that is suffering as a result of these ill-conceived actions, for in the absence of a budget it is forced to operate on the basis of Financial Regulation 3.04, that is, to receive funding at 2021 levels.

It seems paradoxical that such a situation is being brought about by those who shout loudest about the “importance of adopting the budget proposal as soon as possible”, but who at the same time are blocking Russian proposals that could break the deadlock in the discussions on the budget. They are the ones who most often bemoan the lack of resources due to high inflation. (Incidentally, who happens to be responsible for that inflation? It is obviously no one else but their own national financial authorities.) Come to think of it, though, there is nothing surprising about this, since double standards are the hallmark of their policies.

Those very countries hypocritically call upon others to “join the consensus”. A consensus that in reality does not exist as yet, given that the basic principle in reaching consensus, whether at the OSCE or in a United Nations system organization, is that “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.” And until that principle is put into practice, the current crisis will merely keep on growing.

To sum up, we declare that, the sooner the aforementioned participating States realize that their present tactics are fruitless and futile, that it is necessary to reach agreement, rather than blaming others for the lack of consensus, the better it will be for the entire Organization.

Thank you for your attention.