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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
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RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS ON MILITARY
SECURITY AND ARMS CONTROL, AT THE 1048th PLENARY MEETING OF
THE OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

7 June 2023

**Agenda item: Security Dialogue
Subject: OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security**

Madam Chairperson,

We strongly protest at the latest blatant manifestation of the biased and politicized approach by the Bulgarian Chairmanship in shaping the programme of work of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC).

The concept note circulated a few days ago for the Security Dialogue on the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security contained inappropriate passages about “the war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine” as well as unqualified accusations of violation of international humanitarian law by the Russian Federation, which Bulgaria has arbitrarily made the focus of today’s discussion. This is despite the fact that the FSC Chairmanship has no authority to make assessments concerning the implementation of the Code of Conduct by participating States. We consider this step to be a gross violation of the norms, rules and traditions of an OSCE decision-making negotiating body.

We note that you, as its Chairperson, have not heeded the statements by the Russian delegation on the inadmissibility of your use of any non-consensus language and on the need to agree the FSC agenda with all participating States, without exception, including Russia. You have ignored our concerns regarding the unbalanced representation of keynote speakers in the FSC panel, which gives rise to justifiable misgivings about the future course of discussions on politico-military aspects of European security and is leading to an exacerbation of the current crisis in the OSCE.

The fact that this is happening precisely during the Bulgarian Chairmanship of the Forum is indicative of the way Bulgaria is using the Chairmanship to promote narrow national and bloc-based priorities, ignoring the views of other participating States. We regard this as a violation of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE.

We are obliged to recall an evident truth: it is unacceptable for the Forum to be used as an instrument for promoting the Chairmanship’s political preference. The FSC is the platform for dialogue and co-operation, for which the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe was created almost half a

century ago. It is most regrettable that in the past two months this valuable resource has been subject to regular and inadmissible abuses.

It is solely out of sincere respect for such a fundamental OSCE document as the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security that the Russian delegation will not block the adoption of the agenda of the FSC meeting today. But henceforth in our contacts with future FSC Chairmanships we will be guided by the principle “you reap what you sow”. Russia will not allow the FSC to become a “tribunal” or a tool for isolating “undesirable” OSCE participating States. We will be particularly attentive to meetings whose concept has not been agreed with Russia.

On a separate note, we regret that, for the second year running, the OSCE participating States have failed to reach consensus on convening the Annual Discussion on the Implementation of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. We believe that in the current circumstances, preventing the holding of traditional politico-military events in the annual OSCE cycle is a convenient way for Western delegations, through the pro-NATO FSC Chairmanship, to place on the agenda only those aspects of the Code of Conduct that appear expedient for them. Well, we have something to say about that.

Madam Chairperson,

The Russian Federation has always firmly adhered to the approach of building a common space of peace and stability based on the principles of equal co-operation and mutual trust, without relying on a balance of threats and counter-threats. We have consistently advocated demilitarization in Europe to remove the threat or use of force from the pan-European security equation. And today we continue to proceed from the postulate – the sole valid postulate in our view – that the Code of Conduct remains one of the core documents calling upon OSCE participating States to build their relations on the basis of sovereign equality, mutual respect and fundamental security principles.

Unfortunately, it has become more and more apparent that some States bring these principles to mind only when it is to their advantage. Let us consider just a few examples.

In 1999, the so-called defensive alliance of NATO unleashed a war against Yugoslavia, more precisely against Serbia, without a United Nations mandate. The reason was the fabricated reports of massacres of Kosovo civilians by Serbian troops. The war resulted in thousands of civilian casualties and took a heavy toll on the Serbian economy and environment.

In 2003, a war was launched against Iraq without the authorization of the United Nations, based on fabricated evidence presented by the United States of America concerning the development of weapons of mass destruction. The aggression by the United States and its allies resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians and the destruction of the country’s infrastructure and economy. The United States committed countless crimes against the Iraqi people, including evidence of torture by the CIA and the US military of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and the notorious Mahmudiyah killings.

In 2011, NATO’s war against Libya was conducted in flagrant violation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1973 and constituted an armed intervention by NATO troops in an internal ethno-political conflict to support one of the parties and to physically eliminate Muammar Gaddafi.

For several years, Western States have intervened in Syria’s internal affairs with the aim of overthrowing its legitimately elected leadership. The part of the country most rich in natural resources is still illegally occupied by the US army.

You might ask what Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya and Syria have to do with the Code of Conduct. After all, these are now just for the history books, and some of the examples cited are not within the OSCE area. To answer a question with a question: do you have two sets of standards – one for the self-appointed “civilized world” and another for everyone else?

Today, the discussion of the Code of Conduct is taking place against the backdrop of an all-out hybrid war against Russia initiated by the collective West. And the huge gap between the provisions of the Code of Conduct and reality is becoming increasingly apparent. In a number of cases, we find no connection at all between the commitments set out in this document and the actions of Western States aimed at undermining the international rule of law.

Take, for example, the provisions of Section I, paragraph 3, which states that participating States “will not strengthen their security at the expense of the security of other States”. The Russian Federation has made honest efforts for decades to strengthen the European security architecture. In December 2021, we handed over to the United States and NATO a draft agreement on measures to ensure security so as to reduce tensions in the Euro-Atlantic area, based on these very principles. However, during consultations in Geneva on 10 January 2022, the United States made it clear that it would not tolerate any military restrictions for itself, NATO or Ukraine.

It has long been clear that the anti-Russian approach of the collective West, now “suited up in armour”, is aimed at inflicting maximum damage on our country. NATO is closing in on our borders. The cherished dream of defeating Russia on the battlefield at any cost through a proxy war and at the same time of “decolonizing” Russia is also being proclaimed more and more loudly. The instrument for achieving this aim has been Ukraine. It pays for its participation in the US geopolitical gambit with the lives of its citizens, with its sovereignty and with its territory. After the coup d’état financed and organized from across the ocean in February 2014, the collective West continues to pump all sorts of weapons into the country, with a view to further escalation.

In violation of paragraphs 6 and 17 of the Code of Conduct, Western States continue to cover up and in effect condone terrorist acts by the Maidan regime, including the murders of the Russian journalists Darya Dugina and Vladlen Tatarsky, the attempted murder of the writer Zakhar Prilepin and the sabotage of the Nord Stream gas pipelines and the Crimean Bridge. The self-proclaimed civilized Western “champions of human rights” have yet to condemn the atrocities by the Ukrainian Nazis and thugs who committed the bloody crimes in Odessa’s Trade Union House. Sabotage and terrorist attacks against the civilian population continue with their tacit consent. Suffice it to recall the tragedies in the Mariupol maternity hospital and the Drama Theatre, and the shelling with Tochka-U tactical missiles of the railway station in Kramatorsk. On the other hand, they give excessive attention to blatant anti-Russian fake news, the aim of which is to accuse our country, stir up Russophobic hysteria, impose sanctions and then “cover everything up”. This is exactly how the Ukrainian and Anglo-Saxon intelligence services worked in Bucha. This is why the former partners are also in no hurry to hand over to us the requested results of the post-mortem examinations of the bodies of the deceased.

As a consequence, the European security system developed by our predecessors is in deep crisis. The root cause was the desire of some participating States in our Organization to replace international law and the Charter of the United Nations with a kind of “rules-based order”. These “rules” have not been seen, nor have they been the object of transparent international negotiations. They are invented and applied to counter the natural processes of forming new autonomous centres of development, which the West is trying to contain through illegitimate unilateral measures. In a desperate attempt to assert their dominance by punishing those who are not amenable, the United States and its subordinate allies invoke their “rules” whenever they need to justify illegitimate steps against those who base their policies on national interests

and international law and refuse to follow the vested interests of the “Golden Billion”. Dissenters are blacklisted.

Under these circumstances, we cannot accept attempts to discredit Russia’s actions, which are carried out in full accordance with Chapter VII, Article 51, of the Charter of the United Nations. The Russian Federation is exercising its right to defend itself against threats that NATO countries have for years been deliberately creating in relation to the security of the inhabitants of Donbas and Russia as a whole.

Madam Chairperson,

Delegations spreading the false argument about the “unprovoked” nature of the special operation are deliberately playing fast and loose with concepts. All this is just a cover for their widespread violations of the OSCE Code of Conduct.

The active use in Ukraine of structures that are largely unregulated by international law, including the Code of Conduct, is the hallmark of the United States and NATO. And it is methods such as these that allow our colleagues to pretend that they remain committed to the principles enshrined in this document.

Suffice it to recall that preparations for the US-organized anti-constitutional coup d’état in Kyiv in February 2014 were made with the active use of non-State actors. Of course, those who came to power through the coup d’état were not fastidious about the means. They began straight away by violating paragraph 25 of the Code of Conduct whereby “the participating States will not tolerate or support forces that are not accountable to or controlled by their constitutionally established authorities.” Such “forces” – and, what is more, forces of a highly nationalistic and neo-Nazi stamp – were the main instruments of the coup. And subsequently, the oligarch-funded and subordinate private armies, despite attempts at some integration into the official military structures, have remained largely uncontrolled. Moreover, now the “tail is wagging the dog”.

Since the very start of the special military operation, the United States and its NATO allies have actively promoted the recruitment of foreign mercenaries, who have flocked to Ukraine not only from Europe and North America, but also from all the hotspots of the world. This is how the Western “instigators” of the hostilities in Ukraine are trying to compensate for the Kyiv regime’s increasing military failures and massive daily losses of troops and equipment.

The actions taken by members of the US intelligence services to recruit ISIS terrorists in Syria for deployment to Ukraine give cause for serious concern. The Al-Tanf base of the US armed forces and the adjacent area are being used for the massing of extremists. The intelligence services are being actively assisted by US private military companies, which are luring into Ukraine experienced jihadists from the Middle East. The international community remembers well how in an anti-Soviet frenzy the United States supported the Taliban in Afghanistan – and the result was 9/11. Now the United States and its European satellites are once again nurturing neo-Nazis and Banderites. It is not difficult to foresee what the United States, its allies and, indeed, the whole of Europe may end up getting in the future.

The Ukrainian armed forces and Ukraine itself have essentially become a NATO private military company. They are paid money, provided with weapons and intelligence and told where to fire and where to attack. It is the Ukrainian people who suffer because they are forced to fight for someone else’s goals. In confirmation of this, Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov said: “We are carrying out NATO’s mission without losing their blood, but with the loss of ours. That is why the West should give us more money and weapons.” This is the formula for NATO’s proxy war “down to the last Ukrainian”.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the West continues to hypocritically turn a blind eye as Ukraine, with the active assistance of foreign mercenaries and private military companies, commits massive war crimes and human rights violations. The main types of violations of international humanitarian law by Ukraine are as follows:

- Uncontrolled distribution of weapons;
- Use of civilians as human shields;
- Movement of military personnel in ambulances and other means of transport with “peaceful” markings;
- Torture and killing of military personnel and civilians;
- Use of inhumane weapons with a large area of impact;
- Preventing the evacuation of civilians;
- Targeted shelling of civilian objectives.

We foresee the knee-jerk objections from Western delegations that this is propaganda. However, a report published on 4 August 2022 by Amnesty International acknowledged that the Ukrainian military was endangering civilians by placing soldiers and weapons systems in residential areas in close proximity to schools and hospitals. The use by the Ukrainian armed forces of inhumane weapons, including high-explosive fragmentation munitions with a wide impact area in residential areas of the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics, which resulted in numerous casualties among the civilian population, was noted in the report of 14 December 2022 by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Incidentally, it is very revealing that a recent article by the non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch on the use of cluster munitions also holds the United States responsible for damage caused by this type of weapon, which has kept quiet about its use by Ukraine.

Would colleagues today dare to contest the reports of these international bodies?

Despite the fact that Ukraine is a party to a number of regional and international human rights treaties, there is overwhelming evidence of torture of our soldiers in Ukrainian captivity. On 24 March 2023, the head of the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, Matilda Bogner, confirmed that about half of the Russian prisoners of war interviewed had described mistreatment by the Ukrainian armed forces and the Security Service of Ukraine. They were beaten, shot in the legs, tortured with electric shocks, sexually assaulted or threatened with death, including by mock executions.

We note that within the walls of the Hofburg these crimes are being simply covered up. These are flagrant violations by Ukraine of the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, which prohibits the cruel treatment and torture of prisoners of war. If anyone in this room still has any doubts about the humiliation of our soldiers, we invite you to watch the video material we distributed to participating States this morning.

Whatever the resolution of the conflict in Ukraine, it is already clear that paragraphs 30, 31 and 34 of the Code of Conduct have been completely ignored, which in turn will have legal consequences for the perpetrators. The mass deaths of thousands of civilians, torture and the destruction of the infrastructure of entire regions in a disastrous humanitarian situation caused by the actions of the Ukrainian security forces

have been documented by Russia's Investigative Committee. Ukrainian neo-Nazis who committed particularly serious crimes against civilians in Donbas have already been arraigned in courts in new regions of our country. Similarly, foreign mercenaries accused of fighting against the Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics and of training and recruiting soldiers of fortune will face trial in Russia. An international public tribunal documenting witness testimonies is already operating in the Russian Federation. Work is under way to create a fully fledged international tribunal based on international law.

Madam Chairperson,

In conclusion, we should like to comment on one of the points in the concept note for the meeting, namely the familiarization of national armed forces with the norms and principles of international humanitarian law. The Russian Ministry of Defence and other security structures attach great importance to the study by personnel of the law of armed conflict and to monitoring its rigorous implementation, while the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation contains measures providing for criminal liability for offences against international humanitarian law. The penalties for these acts are particularly severe. The regulatory framework is being constantly updated and enhanced, as reflected in the national responses to the Code of Conduct Questionnaire.

The Russian army and members of the Wagner volunteer formation are providing all possible assistance to civilians who are directly in the area of combat operations and are suffering from the actions of Ukrainian military personnel and nationalist battalions. Comprehensive assistance is provided in several areas and includes rehabilitation of infrastructure, distribution of humanitarian supplies, and also aid to the injured and the evacuation of the population to safer places, with subsequent provision of housing and social welfare.

Overall, however, today's discussion has shown that for Western colleagues the Code of Conduct is more of a rhetorical nature. It is conveniently mentioned only when there is a need to "deter" dissenters. The problem, however, is that an approach based on double standards does not help to preserve the viability of this unique document. It can work truly effectively only on the basis of impartial, rigorous implementation, co-operation and mutual respect for the interests of all OSCE participating States.

Despite the difficult situation in the field of European security, we consider it necessary to continue the dialogue on the implementation of the Code of Conduct. We expect the norms enshrined therein to be put into practice in a broad international context.

Thank you for your attention.