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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 90th JOINT MEETING OF THE
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION AND THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

21 February 2024

Security Dialogue on security and the environment

Madam Chairperson,

Russia is taking a responsible approach to the fulfilment of its OSCE commitments in the economic and environmental dimension. We agree that environmental degradation can have a serious negative impact on security – a notion that has been echoed many times in various OSCE documents, going all the way back to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. Again, this postulate was reflected in Decision No. 3/21 on strengthening co-operation to address the challenges caused by climate change, adopted at the Ministerial Council meeting in Stockholm in 2021. That consensus-based document augmented the solid set of commitments on environmental protection undertaken by the OSCE participating States, notably through the strengthening of international co-operation in this field.

In the 2007 Madrid Declaration on Environment and Security it is recognized that “co-operation on environmental issues may serve as a tool to prevent tensions, to build confidence and to promote good neighbourly relations in the OSCE region.” This should, as we see it, be the main focus of efforts with a view to fully unlocking the potential of the OSCE’s second “basket”.

The nexus between the environment and conflicts – in particular, the impact of natural disasters and climate change on military infrastructure, missions and operations, as mentioned in the concept note for this event, but also the calls made there for the “greening” of operations by the armed forces and their adaptation to current climate and biodiversity crises – can be considered only in relation to individual countries. Similarly, the mechanisms for responding to natural disasters are different in all the participating States, and there are other, specialized venues for discussing them.

Military conflicts are far from being the principal factor driving threats to the environment. We must not pass over in silence other reasons that are no less, or rather are more, conducive to the escalation of risks. Among these are the aggravation of the problems of poverty and inequality between and within States, unilateral restrictive measures, the refusal to take part in technology exchanges and “green” protectionism.

The Russian Federation concurs that there is an urgent need to respond to climate change. However, this should be done in the framework of mechanisms where the matter is dealt with professionally.

From the very outset we supported the intensification of work on climate change issues as part of the implementation of the Stockholm Ministerial Council decision. Unfortunately, our good intentions were essentially torpedoed as a result of the extreme politicization in addressing matters pertaining to the environment and security in connection with the events in Ukraine. The effectiveness of relevant work by the Organization has not been helped either by the attempts to “isolate” Russia through the replacement of regular OSCE meetings with events held under the auspices of the Chairmanship and the Secretary General.

As an example of the “Ukrainization” of such work, which is so deleterious for the Organization, we may cite the so-called High-Level Conference on Climate Change organized by OSCE Secretary General Helga Schmid on 7 July 2023. This noble idea originally supported by us morphed, as a result of the unscrupulous and unacceptable politicization of environmental issues, into a Russophobic venture for the implementation of which no consensus decision by all the participating States was forthcoming. By the way, in violation of the Rules of Procedure, many continue to refer to that event as an “OSCE conference” (not least on the official website) and to the fund established as one of its outcomes as an “OSCE fund”. That is obviously not the case.

Let me say a few words about the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant, given that the tragic event in question has been recalled yet again. At a special meeting of the Economic and Environmental Committee of the Permanent Council on 19 June 2023 and in a chronology of the strikes on the dam by the Ukrainian armed forces circulated by us (SEC.DEL/229/23/Rev.1, dated 13 June 2023), we set out the evidence base regarding the crimes by the Kyiv regime that led to the destruction of the dam at the Kakhovka plant on 6 June last year. We do not intend to repeat ourselves. Those wishing to do so can refresh their memory of the text of our statement. For us it is clear that there has been a blatant *post facto* politicization of the issue, with labels pinned left and right to suit a group of certain OSCE participating States. What is more, our “partners” have long ceased to care about the truth – all that matters is having a pretext.

We regard today’s initiative to discuss the topic of the environment and security in such a format as an attempt by a group of States to impose on the Organization their vision of the threats to the maintenance of peace, security and defence arising from climate change and environmental degradation. It has nothing to do with the tasks of strengthening international co-operation in the field of environmental protection and minimizing the adverse effects of climate change in accordance with OSCE commitments.

We are interested in resuming non-politicized substantive discussions on issues related to the environment and security in line with the existing solid mandate under the OSCE’s second “basket”. We trust that our partners, too, will recognize, however late in the day, that it is necessary to move away from the promotion of an exclusively confrontational agenda in the interests of harnessing the OSCE’s potential to the fullest extent possible.

Thank you for your attention.