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TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS ON MILITARY SECURITY AND  
ARMS CONTROL, AT THE 980th PLENARY MEETING OF THE  
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO- OPERATION**

23 June 2021

**Agenda item: Security Dialogue  
Subject: Transparency in military exercises and activities**

Mr. Chairperson,

For my part, I should like to thank the Armenian Chairmanship for including this important issue on the agenda of the Forum and to salute the distinguished speakers for their very interesting and informative presentations.

Russia devotes considerable attention to matters relating to the practical implementation of agreed confidence-building measures and to ensuring transparency in military exercises and activities. Suffice to say that in terms of the number of verification activities hosted, our country is the most scrutinized OSCE participating State. I should like to take this opportunity to thank our partners on behalf of the Russian verification centre for the successful co-operation and the professional attitude they showed when conducting inspections under the Vienna Document 2011 during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period that has not been easy for any of us. We intend to continue this constructive interaction.

The Russian Federation implements all provisions of the Vienna Document 2011. During the planning of exercises, a notification (format F-30) is sent indicating the main operational and combat training activities planned for the new training year. A report (format F-25) indicating the theme, training objectives, personnel involved and areas where the planned exercises will be conducted is submitted at least 42 days before the start of these activities.

We openly inform foreign countries under the Vienna Document 2011 about operational and combat training of the armed forces of the Russian Federation, even if this is not stipulated in the Document's provisions. We hold the relevant briefings in the Forum as and when required. For the active phase of the exercise, military attachés, representatives of the NATO Military Liaison Mission in Moscow and others are invited to observe the troop activities. This practice will continue this year.

This autumn we are planning a strategic command and staff exercise "Zapad-2021". It is being preceded by a set of special support exercises with the troops involved engaging in practical activities.

I emphasize that this exercise is planned. It is being carried out in accordance with a decision of the Presidents of Russia and Belarus and is of a defensive nature. As noted by the Russian military leadership, our partners will be informed of the parameters of the exercise within the time frame set out in the relevant international treaties, and international observers and journalists will be able to attend the event itself.

Mr. Chairperson,

We understand the interest shown today by our Western partners in the activities of the armed forces of the Russian Federation. Often the Russian media, speeches and interviews of military leaders talk of the parameters of large-scale military activities conducted in Russia and, as we can see, this is a cause of concern to our partners. On this particular issue, I should like to highlight the following:

First, the Russian armed forces are being developed with the aim of eliminating the discrepancy in weaponization by our neighbours (we have not done this for almost 20 years) and of creating a combat-ready, mobile army equipped with modern weapons, capable of responding to new challenges and threats. Putting into practice the principles of openness and voluntary transparency, we regularly inform our partners of the reforms carried out in the armed forces, changes in the management system and rearmament plans.

Second, we keep partners informed about snap exercises and drills of the armed forces of the Russian Federation. I would like to stress that such activities, which are normal elements of combat training, do not always require mandatory notification. In addition, formations and units of various branches and sections of the armed forces, including those not subject to control under the provisions of the Vienna Document 2011 (navy, air defence forces, strategic missile forces, logistics and other units and subunits), are subject to snap inspections.

Third, we have introduced a new form of interaction between the Russian Ministry of Defence and its foreign partners and the expert community. The Ninth Moscow Conference on International Security is taking place from 22 to 24 June. The conference format is unique in that every year it is attended by senior Ministry of Defence officials, who present the Ministry's views on key military security issues. Importantly, OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid will address this year's session on European security.

Speaking of transparency, I should like to mention a very important aspect relating to the effective use and objective perception of the information provided by the OSCE participating States on military training activities. Our OSCE partners often complain about a perceived lack of transparency, despite the measures we have taken and the use of as many resources as possible. I will not dwell on specific examples, which we have spoken of on many occasions. Unfortunately, our distinguished colleagues have yet to answer the question of how to determine the criteria for the sufficiency of the information provided on exercises and other military activities. We are still waiting for a reasoned response. We assume that it will be based on facts and not on a subjective perception of reality.

Mr. Chairperson,

The unfriendly, to put it mildly, statements made today about Russia demonstrate once again how our partners distort reality by interpreting planned Russian combat training activities conducted on Russian territory as a manifestation of "aggressive intentions". We emphasize that all activities regarding the relocation of Russian units in April were appropriate to the situation and did not affect the security of other States. We warn our partners that attempts to use the Vienna Document 2011 to achieve political goals by supporting one State and exerting pressure on another lead to its being discredited.

In the light of what I have heard today, I feel obliged to ask the representatives of the North Atlantic Alliance what their community is doing to ensure military transparency. How transparent is NATO about ongoing military activities near Russia's borders? And how should one understand statements by the NATO Secretary General accusing Russia of "aggressive aspirations" while at the same time calling for "more openness in the military sphere"? Furthermore, I should like to point out that, in contrast to the NATO countries, the scenarios for Russian exercises have never involved an "anti-Western" orientation.

A response by our distinguished colleagues to the questions raised would be very timely in view of the increase in provocative military activity by the North Atlantic Alliance practically along the entire length of our border. These activities are accompanied by reconnaissance and an intensification of operational training for NATO troops. To save time, I will give just one example. Boeing B-52 Stratofortress bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons were deployed near Russia's borders during the NATO "Baltops 2021" manoeuvres from 6 to 18 June. We saw this as yet another provocation aimed at artificially inflaming tensions. Not only do such activities raise legitimate security concerns, but also the question as to the military necessity for their conduct in the immediate vicinity of our State border.

Mr. Chairperson,

We have taken note of the hostile rhetoric-laden statement by the Ukrainian delegation, which once again chose to sidestep the Ukrainian Government's widespread violations of transparency and instead designate some kind of "external enemy". Unfortunately, in recent years, the Ukrainian representatives have not once reported to the Forum for Security Co-operation on the large-scale military activities in Donbas by the Ukrainian armed forces and the personnel and equipment involved, nor on the exercises in the zone of armed conflict near the line of contact. In addition, our colleagues have never provided a clear explanation for the non-implementation of a significant number of provisions of the Vienna Document 2011.

I think the Forum would be interested to hear what objectives will be served by joint manoeuvres with NATO on the territory of Ukraine and beyond its borders with the participation of the Ukrainian armed forces, especially as 25 are planned for this year. We consider these voluntary transparency measures to be very important, since we are talking about the arrival of foreign military supplies and instructors in a conflict-torn country, including at the line of contact in Donbas.

Incidentally and to our dismay, the distinguished representative from the United States of America made no mention during his briefing on the "Defender Europe 2021" exercise of the details of the joint drills with Ukraine. We would be particularly interested to know how Ukraine and NATO countries would rehearse a "war with Russia". I recall that Oleksiy Arestovych, adviser to the Ukrainian delegation to the Trilateral Contact Group, leaked this information.

In that context, it also begs the question as to how all these facts fit in with the calls for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Ukraine that we have heard this morning. How do they relate to the obligations of the United States and its allies under the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the CSCE Principles Governing Conventional Arms Transfers? How do they relate to paragraph 10 of the Minsk Package of Measures, endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202, on the withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under monitoring of the OSCE?

We are grateful to the distinguished Ukrainian representative for his briefing on the "Sea Breeze 2021" exercise to be held in Ukraine from 28 June to 10 July. However, we are forced to note that the scale and clearly aggressive nature of these drills in no way corresponds to the real security challenges in the Black Sea region. We trust that once the exercise is over, the United States will

demonstrate transparency in its withdrawal of modern weapons, ammunition and materiel from Ukraine so that they do not fall into the hands of the Ukrainian military and nationalist formations stationed near non-government-controlled areas in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

We urge the United States and its allies not to conduct military activities in the Black Sea that increase the risks of unintended incidents. Just today it was reported that the British guided-missile destroyer HMS *Defender* entered Russian territorial waters in the Black Sea. Since our warnings against crossing the border were ignored, we were forced to respond to the British warship accordingly.

Mr. Chairperson,

There has been repeated discussion today about the prospects for the modernization of the Vienna Document 2011. We believe that the existing mechanisms for annual information exchange and notification of certain military activities are sufficient for promoting transparency among OSCE participating States. With NATO countries implementing a policy of “containment” of the Russian Federation, we do not believe it to be expedient to discuss issues aimed at making additional commitments in this area.

At this stage, we consider it necessary to promote initiatives aimed at de-escalating the situation in Europe and reducing military confrontation. We note, however, that our proposal to move the exercises away from the NATO-Russia line of contact, as well as all other initiatives in this field, have effectively been ignored by the Alliance’s strategic leadership. Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke about this today in his address to the participants in the Ninth Moscow Conference on International Security.

In conclusion, let me emphasize that the Russian verification centre is ready to implement confidence-building measures on equal, mutually respectful terms with precise compliance with the provisions of the Vienna Document 2011. In our view, this essential tool for building confidence and transparency in the military sphere should be seen, above all, as an instrument for developing professional co-operation between the armed forces of the participating States.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.