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PC.DEL/388/23
23 March 2023

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
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THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1416th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 March 2023

**On the ongoing crimes by the Kyiv regime and the dangerous policies of the countries
from the Western alliance to escalate tensions**

Mr. Chairperson,

Realizing that time is not working in favour of their geopolitical adventures, a number of NATO countries are hastily preparing Volodymyr Zelenskyy's formations for a military offensive deep into the territory of the Russian Federation. Thousands of military personnel are being drilled at training grounds in the United Kingdom, European countries and the United States of America. The deliveries of military equipment continue, assault forces are being massed.

All the talk by Western representatives in this room about striving for a political and diplomatic solution to the situation in Ukraine is a pack of lies. What we are seeing are clearly military preparations: escalation is the name of the game. The NATO countries need the territory of Ukraine as a bridgehead. Once they have entrenched themselves there, they intend to continue undermining regional stability, advancing the hegemonistic aspirations of the United States, flaunting with impunity their double standards and trying to propagate some sort of mythical "rules-based world order" as a counterweight to the system of international law.

Under the destructive pressure of the collective West and, since 2014, operating in "external control mode", Ukraine, once a flourishing post-Soviet republic with zero foreign debt and tremendous economic potential, has become one of the poorest and most unstable countries on our continent. All this despite the many years of financial and resource-based assistance provided by Russia to the Ukrainian economy. The geopolitical experiments and ambitions of the West in relation to Ukraine have brought suffering, deprivation and endless domestic political turbulence upon the Ukrainian people.

Today it is obvious that a successful future for Ukraine would have been possible if sensible use had been made of the Soviet industrial and economic legacy, if well-established regional economic ties had been built upon, if good-neighbourly, friendly relations with all the peoples of the former USSR had been cultivated. To prevent that, the West actively interfered in domestic political processes in Ukraine, demanded that ties that had been forged over centuries be rent asunder (for example, by imposing an artificial choice between Russia and the European Union), threw itself into supporting Ukrainian radical

nationalism and neo-Nazism, fostered Russophobia and encouraged the enshrinement in legislation of discrimination against people on ethnic grounds. After the February 2014 coup d'état, which was orchestrated, funded and organized from abroad, a puppet regime cast in a totalitarian and neo-Nazi mould was installed in Kyiv. As for the territory under its control, that is nowadays *de facto* under a foreign protectorate.

It is those very external forces steering the Kyiv regime that today do not allow peace to be established in Ukraine. They do not want dialogue; they systematically reject international diplomatic initiatives for a settlement process that would soberly take account of present-day realities and take into consideration the legitimate interests of the region's countries, not least in the field of security.

In that regard it is worth noting the US Government's nervous, repetitive reaction to China's position on a settlement of the Ukrainian crisis as recently disseminated. Virtually at once, even before any assessments had been shared by the Ukrainian Government, that plan was rejected by both the US Department of State (Antony Blinken) and the White House (John Kirby). A few days ago, in connection with, *inter alia*, the State visit by the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, to the Russian Federation from 20 to 22 March, those in Washington, D.C, reiterated to the Kyiv regime their stance by describing any kind of ceasefire as "unacceptable". That is, they openly spoke out against an armistice and in favour of continuing the hostilities – in favour of further casualties and destruction. They essentially confirmed not only their determination to fight "down to the last Ukrainian" but also that what is in effect being pursued is the complete destruction of Ukraine.

The NATO countries' actions testify to the fact that they are aimed at maintaining tensions – at maintaining a protracted and large-scale armed conflict. For example, it was recently reported that 17 EU countries and Norway had reached an agreement on jointly procuring and supplying to the Kyiv regime ammunition worth around 2 billion euros, which will be manufactured in the territory of the European Union, among other places. In addition, the United States has announced yet another package of military "assistance" for Mr. Zelenskyy to the tune of 350 million dollars. All this is accompanied by false appeals for diplomacy and claims that these States are not involved in the armed confrontation in Ukraine.

Incidentally, judging from the reaction of most of the world to the West's attempts to hold on to its hegemony by facing off against Russia in Ukraine it is evident that the European Union and NATO will never be able to explain to non-Western countries what advantages they could possibly obtain from confrontation with Russia. Nor will those at the OSCE manage to do that either. I would remind you that non-Western countries with an aggregate population of around 6 billion have not joined in the illegitimate restrictive measures against Russia. Meanwhile, more than a year since the start of the Russian special military operation, NATO's hopes for a military defeat of Russia or for a successful economic blitzkrieg against our country have not been fulfilled. Nor will they ever be fulfilled.

Mr. Chairperson,

The attacks by Mr. Zelenskyy's formations against civilian infrastructure in Donbas and the Dnieper Lowland, carried out using artillery of NATO-standard calibre, resulted last week in four civilians being killed and at least 36 being injured. In the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics alone, a good hundred houses and more than 20 infrastructure facilities were damaged. A school was again hit in the city of Donetsk – this time it was the turn of school No. 113.

In violation of Ukraine's obligations under international law, the Kyiv regime continues to actively engage in remote mining of residential areas with anti-personnel mines, including PFM-1 Lepestok landmines. These crimes being committed against the civilian population affect principally the territory of

the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) of the Russian Federation. On 18 March, an inhabitant of the settlement of Andriivka was killed by such a mine. All in all, there have been at least 98 recorded cases of civilians being blown up by mines of that type in the DPR over the past year, including nine children.

We are now hearing the UK authorities speak of their intention to supply armour-piercing shells containing depleted uranium to the Kyiv regime – a statement to that effect by Annabel Goldie, a Minister of State at the UK Ministry of Defence, was published on the British Parliament's official website on 20 March. The reasoning over there is that weapons with such a component will not be used in England's "green and pleasant land" as such but, rather, that they will be deployed against Russians and Ukrainians thousands of kilometres from the "foggy shores of Albion". The consequences do not matter. The UK Government's plans once again attest not just to its direct involvement in the Ukrainian conflict but to a willingness to contemplate further risks of escalation and even war crimes. They also, by the way, attest to a consumer mentality with regard to the land of Ukraine, which is merely of utilitarian interest to the Western countries in the context of confrontation with Russia.

We recall that depleted uranium ordnance was used during the NATO countries' aggression against the sovereign State Yugoslavia in 1999 with a view to destroying its territorial integrity and tearing away from it the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija without consideration for the will of the people living there. The attacks using these munitions inflicted untold suffering on civilians not only during the actual military aggression by the NATO bloc but also long after. The consequences are making themselves felt decades later – indeed to this very day – in terms of both damage to the environment and effects on the health of civilians, notably an increasing number of cases of cancer.

A similar picture is to be found in Iraq, where exactly 20 years ago, such munitions were also used in the course of an operation (one not approved by the United Nations) by the Western powers to overthrow the legitimate government and destroy Iraqi statehood.

No one, incidentally, has ever been held accountable for all this, notwithstanding the mendacious and hypocritical claims by Western representatives in this room that they are consistently standing up for protection of the civilian population in conflicts and seeking to develop legal mechanisms for such protection.

Mr. Chairperson,

On 17 March, it was announced that a Pre-Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) had decided to bring unlawful and knowingly false charges against the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, and the Commissioner for Children's Rights in the Russian Federation, Maria Lvova-Belova. This decision, taken on the basis of an application submitted on 22 February by the Prosecutor of the ICC, Karim Khan, is juridically and substantively null and void and cannot have any legal consequences, not least in view of the fact that Russia does not recognize the ICC's jurisdiction. These attempts at prosecution are knowingly illegal, since there are no grounds for prosecuting the individuals concerned.

The actions of the ICC's Pre-Trial Chamber betray the arbitrary and purely political, as opposed to legal, rationale behind the decision adopted, which has nothing in common with the principle of the rule of law. We hereby inform you that, in this connection, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation has opened criminal proceedings against the Prosecutor of the ICC, Karim A. A. Khan (in his actions there are indicia of offences punishable under Article 299, paragraph 2, Article 30, paragraph 1, and Article 360, paragraph 2, of the Russian Criminal Code), and the ICC judges Tomoko Akane, Rosario Salvatore Aitala and Sergio Gerardo Ugalde Godínez (for offences under Article 301, paragraph 2, Article 30, paragraph 1, and Article 360, paragraph 2, of the Russian Criminal Code).

Mr. Chairperson,

In less than a week's time, on 29 March, the ultimatum issued by the Kyiv regime to representatives of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) regarding the rights to the use of one of the main hallowed sites of Russian Orthodoxy, the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, will expire. Unprecedented pressure continues to be exerted on UOC hierarchs who have remained faithful to the Orthodox ecclesiastical canon. The Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) continues to consider two anti-church draft laws, one of which envisages the elimination of the governing bodies of the canonical church in Ukraine, that is, the destruction of the entire UOC in effect.

On 20 March, members of the UOC Synod arrived at the Office of President Zelenskyy to meet with the top figure in the Kyiv regime. It is telling that Mr. Zelenskyy refused to meet them. This despite the fact that, immediately after he was elected, he went to the residence of the Metropolitan of the UOC on 30 April 2019 and promised that freedom of religion would enjoy proper legal protection and that there would be no interference in religious life.

The blow being dealt to Ukrainian Orthodoxy is a deliberate one; it was planned and co-ordinated. Its aim is to restrict freedom of religion, intensify social conflicts and subordinate Ukrainian Orthodoxy to the political views of the Kyiv regime. We reiterate our appeal to the OSCE leadership and all relevant OSCE structures to take decisive and effective measures to protect religious freedoms in Ukraine. The destruction of these freedoms by the Kyiv regime while the OSCE stands idly by or is incapable of ensuring compliance with the applicable obligations under international law is having a most negative impact on confidence in our Organization's readiness to live up to its mandate.

To sum up, if a sustainable peace is to be achieved, it is essential to put a stop to the supplying of NATO weapons and mercenaries to the Kyiv regime and to their being used to kill Russians and Ukrainians. It is necessary to work towards a cessation of hostilities and strive for a return to substantive dialogue on a demilitarized and denazified future for Ukraine – dialogue that must take into account the realities that have arisen on the ground. Moreover, it is categorically unacceptable to ignore – for the sake of advancing the interests of players from outside the region – the local population's opinion, which was expressed through democratic procedures and has been enshrined in legislation.

We stress that the Kyiv regime's foreign handlers must realize the perniciousness of attempts to escalate the military confrontation in and around Ukraine. Russia will continue to steadfastly defend its legitimate national interests and protect its people by all available means.

Thank you for your attention.