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FEDERATION, AT THE 977th PLENARY MEETING OF THE  
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

26 May 2021

**Subject: Arms control and confidence- and security-building measures**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Esteemed colleagues,

First of all, I should like to express my gratitude to the Armenian Chairmanship of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) for the invitation to give a presentation on this highly relevant topic.

For half a century now, arms control has been a key tool for strengthening international security and stability.

However, this tool does not exist in a vacuum. If we take a closer look at history, then we can see that there have been periods of waxing and waning in its development. As a rule, the upturns were linked to the conclusion of an acute phase of confrontation and the setting in of a new balance of power: for example, when strategic parity in military terms was reached between the Soviet Union and the United States of America in the early 1970s, or when the Cold War ended in the late 1980s. And vice versa, during periods of escalation and a rise in military tensions, this process slowed down and was even rolled back: for example, when intermediate- and short-range strategic nuclear missiles were deployed in the European NATO countries at the start of the 1980s, or, if one delves deeper into history, at the start of the 1930s. It was with regard to the latter that Stalin remarked: “Germany’s withdrawal from the League of Nations and the spectre of revanchism have further added to the tension and have given a fresh impetus to the growth of armaments in Europe. It is not surprising that bourgeois pacifism is now dragging out a miserable existence, and that idle talk of disarmament is giving way to ‘business-like’ talk about armament and rearmament.”<sup>1</sup>

All my esteemed colleagues will probably agree that now, too, arms control is in a state of crisis. Only over the reasons for this crisis is there likely to be disagreement. Some people consider – it is an opinion we have just heard – that all the blame should be laid at the door of Russia, which is undermining the so-called “rules-based security order”. The only problem is that certain countries believe themselves to be entitled to unilaterally set, change and revoke these “rules”, which are essentially being treated as an

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<sup>1</sup> English translation taken from: Marxists Internet Archive  
(<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1934/01/26.htm>)

alternative to international law. They also believe themselves to be entitled to use force when that suits their interests.

Our opponents take a highly “pragmatic” – let us use that diplomatic term – attitude towards the arms control agreements they have concluded. When at the end of the 1960s they understood that they were lagging behind the USSR in the development of anti-missile defence systems, they preferred to conclude an appropriate agreement. Thirty years later, it seemed to them that there was an opportunity to leap ahead and so they withdrew from that agreement.

It was the same with conventional arms. When three in four tanks worldwide were Soviet, conventional arms control was a priority for the West. Yet, after Russia’s withdrawal of its troops and reduction of its equipment, the NATO countries grudgingly agreed to the drawing up of the Agreement on Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty), but in the end they did not ratify it. At the time it seemed more important to “squeeze out” the remaining (numerically very small) Russian forces from the post-Soviet space. Simultaneously they circumvented the CFE Treaty-related restrictions by expanding NATO. The outcome for the CFE Treaty was a sad one: Russia was forced to suspend the application of the Treaty, which has ultimately forfeited much of its significance. Even so, we kept the door for dialogue open for a long time afterwards, continuing to work, at the request of the States Parties, in the Joint Consultative Group until March 2015.

In general, the period from the late 1990s to the early 2000s – that is, when the United States withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the NATO member countries refused to ratify the adapted CFE Treaty – was a watershed in arms control. On the basis of the Clinton concept of “American leadership” (meaning effectively a unipolar world), those in Washington, D.C., came to the conclusion that since the United States did not have any equal rivals, arms control was irrelevant (the sole exception continuing to be in the case of strategic offensive arms). We can still feel the consequences of that conclusion.

It has also had an impact on the “Vienna platform”, and not just in relation to the CFE Treaty: for over ten years we kept being told that it was impossible to “open up” the Vienna Document. Only the loss of a significant volume of information on the Russian armed forces, previously provided through the CFE Treaty, induced the NATO countries to make a U-turn on the Vienna Document and ultimately to launch a campaign for its modernization. Admittedly, by then the window of opportunity had closed and it can now be reopened only once NATO abandons – moreover, not in words but in deeds – its policy of “containing” Russia.

By the way, if I were in the position of my esteemed US colleagues, I would be more careful in promoting the modernization of the Vienna Document. For even if and when such dialogue becomes possible, others participating in it may have their own priorities. For example, they might ask why a State whose territory is not covered by confidence- and security-building measures should be conducting inspections.

Of course, it might be objected that one must not reduce the level of transparency that has already been attained. That argument is a double-edged one, though.

Let us turn to the Treaty on Open Skies as an example. Since it did not have sufficient information on what was happening on the territory of the USSR, the US Government twice – in the 1950s and the late 1980s – insistently promoted the idea of “Open Skies”, even though it had no intention whatsoever of “opening up” its own land mass and the activities of its Navy for inspections and the exchange of information. I would remind you that, for ten years, the Western participants in the Treaty exhorted Russia

to ratify it. Subsequently it was, again, the United States that proposed moving implementation of the Treaty on Open Skies to a digital basis, probably in the expectation that it would be able to capitalize on its technological superiority. However, as soon as Russia had created its own digital sensors, the United States did everything possible to throw up obstacles to observation flights over its own territory. The culmination of all this “openness” and “transparency” was the withdrawal of the United States from the Treaty on Open Skies (it should be recalled that US participation in the Treaty was originally a precondition for its entry into force). The Treaty thus finds itself on the brink of collapse. It is still possible to save it, but the time for that is fast running out. Russia has done so on a number of occasions, sacrificing at times its own interests. No one should expect us to make one-sided concessions once again. The choice today is the US Government’s. I shall now quote some words that the current US President, Joe Biden, said a year ago: “Instead of tearing up treaties that make us and our allies more secure, President Trump should take common sense steps to keep Americans safe. He should remain in the Open Skies Treaty and work with allies to confront and resolve problems regarding ... compliance.” Let us see how far the current US administration’s deeds will match these sensible words.

On the whole, quite a few questions have come up for us in recent years as to the ability of our Western partners-cum-opponents to honour their treaty-related obligations and as to their real plans. For the sake of preserving its dominance and one-sided advantages and expanding its opportunities to exert politico-military pressure on other States, the US Government has deliberately destroyed a number of crucial international agreements in the field of arms control and is continuing on its course of undermining the work of the relevant multilateral forums.

In addition to the steps that I mentioned earlier, this course includes the scuppering of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the increasing efforts to turn the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons into a pliant tool for realizing the US Government’s geopolitical plans and pressurizing “undesirable” States. It also includes large-scale programmes to develop weapons systems intended for applying force from outer space (or for threatening the use of such force), also in relation to the space assets of other States.

Significantly, this is by no means an exhaustive list of the destabilizing actions that have provoked and aggravated the crisis in the arms control system and harmed international and European security and stability. If my esteemed US colleagues so wish, I could add to this list.

It is legitimate to ask: how, then, can one reverse the current negative trend and overcome the crisis in arms control?

Evidently, at a global level this will only be possible amidst a general improvement in the politico-military situation. But this does not mean that it is necessary to sit twiddling one’s thumbs and resignedly prepare for the worst (as is, unfortunately, characteristic of a considerable number of States represented at the FSC). It is possible and necessary to implement in good faith the existing agreements, to engage patiently and constructively in the Structured Dialogue, and to take steps towards the de-escalation of tensions in the contact zone between Russia and the NATO countries and towards incident prevention and resolution. Working on the premise that it is important, as a matter of principle, to restore mutual trust and strengthen co-operation on international security, Russia intends to play a systematic part in these efforts on equal terms with our partners.

That being said, though, it should be remembered that achieving a secure Europe is impossible unless Russia and its allies are themselves secure (and it is all the more impossible if it is to be achieved at the expense of our own security). Any dialogue on politico-military matters and arms control issues can be

conducted solely on the basis of equal rights and reciprocal consideration of each other's interests and concerns. A "one-way street" will not be tolerated here.

We urge that the window of opportunity that has opened slightly be used – I am referring to the recent extension of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which our country had long insisted on, and also to the forthcoming Russian-US meeting at the highest level – so that the first steps can be taken towards restoring the momentum for arms control.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.