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**STATEMENT BY
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FEDERATION TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS ON MILITARY SECURITY
AND ARMS CONTROL, AT THE 1050th PLENARY MEETING OF THE
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

21 June 2023

**Agenda item: Security Dialogue
Subject: United Nations Security Council resolution 1325
on women and peace and security**

Madam Chairperson,

First of all, we should like to congratulate our colleagues on the forthcoming International Day of Women in Diplomacy. Today, the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) is marking this occasion in the context of its discussion of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, which was originally meant to reduce conflict potential in the world and strengthen the role of women in reconstruction after crises and conflicts. However, the situation at present is disappointing and the outlook for the future remains pessimistic.

Once again in this room today, we have witnessed the Bulgarian FSC Chairmanship indulging in the politicization of the Security Dialogue discussions. As soon as the concept note for the meeting was received, it became clear that a balanced exchange of views would be impossible as long as any topic was reduced to a one-sided and extremely biased coverage of the situation in Ukraine.

We regret that the Bulgarian Chairmanship has not even attempted to take a balanced approach to a problem as multidimensional as the protection of women in armed conflict. As expected, everything has once again been reduced to satisfying narrow bloc interests illustrated by the information transmitted by anti-Russian Western ideologues.

Not to mention that, in accordance with Section I, paragraph 1, of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE, the preparation of any Security Dialogue (especially on aspects of the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325) must take into account the views of all OSCE participating States without exception in conditions of full equality. We consider the absence of even the intention to invite to a meeting of the Forum speakers representing an alternative viewpoint to that of NATO and the European Union to be an unfriendly move that only deepens the crisis of co-operation within the FSC.

Madam Chairperson,

Turning to the topic of discussion announced today, we should like to stress that Russia has consistently given high priority to the issue of women, peace and security. Since 1998, staff from Russia's internal affairs bodies have been participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions. In addition, we attach importance to the training of women peacekeepers. In particular, United Nations-certified courses for foreign law enforcement officers are organized at the All-Russian Peacekeeper Training Centre of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation in the city of Domodedovo, where women also undergo training.

Over the more than 20 years since the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, which set the stage for discussing the women, peace and security agenda at the Security Council, it has become clear that the primary role in protecting women in a conflict lies with national governments. The measures taken by United Nations system bodies, the OSCE and civil society must be aimed at supporting and complementing the efforts of States.

Furthermore, we note that addressing challenges related to the topic of women, peace and security cannot replace the full range of commitments that every State has with regard to ensuring "gender equality" and empowering women. Nor do we consider it meaningful to overestimate the significance of the so-called "gender factor" in strengthening resilience in geographical areas affected by the actions of armed and terrorist groups. The emphasis here should be on swiftly resolving the crises themselves.

We are convinced that the task of ensuring equality between the sexes – both within OSCE structures and in the participating States – should not focus on figures alone. Women and men need to be promoted on the basis of their professional skills, knowledge and experience. The OSCE's programmatic and project activities should be based on that, rather than on the artificial imposition of quotas. The ubiquitous embedding of the so-called "gender" issue – often approached from a non-consensus, neoliberal angle – in the work of the Organization's executive structures is counterproductive in our view.

We should also like to caution against attempts to impose a broad interpretation of the women, peace and security agenda. We recall that this agenda comprises not only the well-known United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 but also the nine subsequent relevant resolutions. The thematic scope of these documents hardly overlaps with the existing OSCE commitments approved by all the participating States.

For our part, we reaffirm our willingness to share our experience in tackling problems in this field and to draw on the positive practices of other countries, and remain open to co-operation with the international community on all aspects pertaining to the topic of women, peace and security on the relevant platforms.

Madam Chairperson,

That would be a good place to end today's statement, but it is simply impossible to ignore what has been said by a number of delegations.

Today we have heard groundless accusations against Russian military personnel who are fulfilling their duty within the framework of the special military operation. We firmly reject these unfounded insinuations. We consider them to be part of an unscrupulous information war against our country. Compliance with international humanitarian law has unconditional priority for the Russian army.

It is absolutely clear that the representatives of Ukraine and Western countries, with their false statements devoid of any evidential basis in the manner of the former Ombudsperson of Ukraine, Liudmyla Denisova, who caused a worldwide scandal, want to sweep under the carpet the crimes of Kyiv's neo-Nazis in Donbas, which the successors to Bandera and Shukhevych committed shortly after the bloody coup d'état of 2014 and continued to commit right up to the start of the special military operation. At the moment, in the liberated territories, Russian investigative bodies are recording a multitude of brutal crimes committed by the Ukrainian punitive forces: from oral testimonies of victims of violence to the opening of mass graves containing raped women, who, after the atrocity was committed, were described as Russian collaborators and shot.

On 21 February last year, at a meeting of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, President Vladimir Putin noted that it was primarily nationalist formations that were directly responsible for the genocide and crimes against humanity in Donbas, including crimes against women and girls. The President's words are confirmed by criminal case files and the reports of authoritative international organizations, including the United Nations, which describe the atrocities committed.

I have in my hands one of the many compilations of instances of war crimes and human rights violations by the Ukrainian armed forces between 2017 and 2020. This weighty volume contains 425 pages – that is roughly equivalent to the number of real, terrible and shocking stories that Maxim Grigoriev, a member of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, and his colleagues from the Foundation for the Study of Democracy managed to record. Imagine how many episodes the international community has yet to learn about.

Here is just one testimony from Donetsk journalist Elena Blokha, who spent almost three months in Ukrainian Security Service cells in 2014: “In a 3x1.5 metre room lined with white tiles (it looked like a warehouse), there was only one chair where a girl with a pale face was sitting. ‘Keep it open, please!’ she pleaded, turning to the young man. ‘Be patient. You have to be strong,’ he answered, mocking affectionately and shut the door tightly. It became absolutely dark and very stuffy. There was no ventilation. Her cellmate told Blokha that they took her ‘to the firing squad’ twice, trying to get her to admit that she was a DPR saboteur: ‘They promised to bury me right there in a trench, and no one would find me if I didn’t agree to work with them,’ Yulia said, breathing heavily.”

Startling, wouldn't you say? It is no doubt rhetorical to ask the legitimate question as to why such facts have not been spoken about for nine years by the representatives of Western States sitting here. For them the very thought of the voices of the women of Donbas, who have been living under the Kyiv regime's shelling since 2014, being heard at the FSC is unacceptable. Perhaps we will hear an answer today as to how such a selective approach fits in with the declared “faithful implementation of resolution 1325”, when the Chairmanship and the participating States close their eyes to the situation of the women in certain regions of the world.

It has come to the point where even some pro-Western non-governmental organizations, which can hardly be accused of sympathizing with our country, have drawn attention to the situation of women and children in Donbas. Back in 2020, a report entitled “Not a Private Matter” was released, citing documented evidence of their rape and harassment. The Ukrainian military has been a source of further mass fear for women and children, the authors of the 88-page report state, citing a wealth of facts and testimonies from survivors and psychologists.

All of the aforementioned is only a small sample of the documentary evidence against the Ukrainian criminals, including that being compiled by the main military investigation department of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation. They will surely answer for the atrocities they have committed.

Madam Chairperson,

Today's statements by Western participating States raise another extremely important concern. Let's be honest. Are women always the victims of conflicts? Don't women often support them? After all, illegal sanctions contrary to the Charter of the United Nations are also lobbied for by women. Suffice it to recall how in 1996 former Secretary of State of the United States of America Madeleine Albright spoke of the political expediency of the death of around half a million Iraqi children as a result of US sanctions. It turns out that some women pose a direct threat to global security, while others are their victims. It is worth reflecting on that point of view.

This discussion confirms that no international or regional organization will be able to make a proper contribution to the advancement of the women, peace and security agenda while women representing regions regarded as "undesirable" by some States are denied free expression and the right to life. The Russian Federation is doing its utmost to change this state of affairs.

In the meantime, the harmful practice of suppressing evidence of crimes against women and children continues here at the FSC. This cancels out any effort, even the most noble international endeavour, to promote United Nations Security Council resolution 1325. This irresponsible approach calls into question the ability of the OSCE, as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, to contribute, within its clearly limited mandate, to the fulfilment of the goals and objectives of resolution 1325.

As for the FSC's work, by the next round of meetings we will seriously rethink our approach to such events, which divide rather than unite Forum participants.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.