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United States Mission to the OSCE
U.S. Statement for the
Forum for Security Cooperation:
General Statements

As delivered by Arms Control Counselor Daniel Wartko
February 15, 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Our Russian colleague reminded us last week that it has been 80 years since the end of the Battle of Stalingrad. In a bit of political theater, Vladimir Putin visited Volgograd two weeks ago, and while there, unveiled a new bust of Joseph Stalin and reverted the name of the city back to Stalingrad. It's very telling that Putin would choose to venerate Joseph Stalin, an immensely cruel dictator, who murdered millions of his own people and deliberately starved four-million Ukrainians to death during the Holodomor. Joseph Stalin, who slaughtered Orthodox priests, Catholic priests, and who cut a deal with Hitler, seized half of Poland, crushed the independence of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and attempted, but failed, to conquer Finland. This is Putin's role model.

It's also telling that Russia had to reach so far back in history to find a time when its security had actually been threatened. We hear our Russian colleague's absurd complaints about the lack of security guarantees for Russia, while his country's borders have not been threatened for nearly eight decades.

We hear our colleague say last week, and I quote, "We made it clear to our interlocutors at the FSC that the moment of truth is coming when the West either accepts our proposal or other ways will be found to ensure the security of Russia." End quote. I fail to see how this represents dialogue at all. This could only be understood as an ultimatum. Accept our demands or else!

A history lesson indeed is in order, but not one eighty years ago but rather just one year ago, when participating States became concerned enough about Russia's military build-up in Belarus, along Ukraine's borders and in illegally occupied Crimea, that they invoked the Vienna Document's risk-reduction mechanism separately against Russia and Belarus. Rather than engage in dialogue, Russia sent a note verbale stating that it, quote, "... sees no grounds for applying the procedures under paragraph 16 of the Vienna Document-2011, that it will not take part in the Vienna Document meeting and in the possible meeting provided for

in sub-clauses 16.2 and 16.3, respectively, and objects to the adoption of any decisions at a possible joint Permanent Council and Forum for Security Co-operation meeting.” End quote. Russia instead complained about Ukrainian activity yet failed to mention that it never bothered to use the OSCE’s confidence- and security-building tools to resolve its concerns. Belarus attended its meeting but continued to deny that anything was amiss. It called the meeting a “distortion” and suggested that the whole process was “accusatory” and “inflammatory.” Nine days later, Russia, with Belarus’s enabling, launched its brutal invasion of Ukraine.

Mr. Chair,

Revisionist history is a favorite Kremlin pastime; however, it’s much harder to do these days when everything we say in here is on the record. With the multitude of lies being told to all of us by Russia and Belarus in this forum from week to week, ranging from imaginary neo-Nazis to fictitious biological and chemical weapons facilities to claims of destroyed HIMARS systems in numbers that far exceed the number that Ukraine even has, it must be very hard to keep the lies all straight. But we do not have to go searching for contradictions because they are all in plain sight and in black and white. The history of Russia’s brutal war against Ukraine will be one that Russia and Belarus will not be able to escape. No amount of invented scenarios will be able to refute the fact that Russia and Belarus lied to all of us here in this Forum in order to provide cover for Russia to invade Ukraine. And when the day of reckoning comes for Russia and Belarus, their own words will be waiting to indict them.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.