

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

FSC.DEL/345/21
30 September 2021

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. KONSTANTIN GAVRILOV,
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS ON MILITARY SECURITY AND
ARMS CONTROL, AT THE 987th PLENARY MEETING OF THE
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

29 September 2021

**Agenda item: Security Dialogue
Subject: The future of conventional arms control**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful that you have organized this plenary meeting summing up the results of the September discussions at the Forum for Security Co-operation on the past, present and future of conventional arms control in Europe. We thank the distinguished keynote speakers for their extremely interesting thoughts on how conventional arms control in Europe could over time be brought into line with the contemporary security realities. Accumulating “intellectual capital” in this sphere is an important and necessary task. We are convinced that it may prove to be in demand, if and when the political conditions are ripe for this.

The discussions have confirmed that Western and Russian assessments of the current challenging situation in the field of “hard” security in Europe diverge considerably. The reasons for its deterioration are being addressed at the OSCE in an atmosphere of a rather sharp controversy. It shows that our partners from the United States of America and NATO (some of whom, by the way, no longer consider themselves as such) have no desire to find common ground at this stage. The “containment” of Russia is beginning to take on a momentum of its own, while the so-called “openness to dialogue” takes a back seat.

Judging by the reaction of the audience here, the proposals made by the keynote speakers for updating conventional arms control in Europe do not seem to strike much of a chord with their colleagues. The “English-speaking trio” continue to harp on about the modernization of the Vienna Document 2011 and about “violations” of OSCE principles and commitments. And the United States has spoken today about the need to update the Vienna Document 2011 without any preconditions. I should like to recall that our US colleagues themselves always and deliberately attach a number of conditions to the achievement of agreements. I have first-hand experience of this, having worked at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons for more than a decade.

As has already been mentioned, the process of preparing for fresh negotiations on conventional arms control in Europe is practically at a standstill at the present time. Our Western partners have taken a break in

the light of the events in Ukraine. In this way, they assume political responsibility for determining the time frame for the resumption of dialogue.

We believe it will not be easy for them to cut this break short. It is clear that there will be no decisive answer from the NATO countries to the question “what must happen for it to end?” Some of them are clearly proposing a set of conditions under which the Alliance’s wait-and-see position may drag on for years.

As we understand, one such condition is the modernization of the Vienna Document 2011. It is strange for us to hear claims that, for example, increasing inspection teams or the number of notifiable exercises will significantly improve the security situation. Do our colleagues really believe this themselves? Given the anti-Russian politico-military and sanctions policy of Western countries, along with the increase in provocative activity on the Alliance’s “eastern flank”, an agreement on updating the Vienna Document 2011 is out of the question.

We are obliged to note that opting for confrontation with our country inevitably leads to a degradation of arms control and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs). In particular, the efforts of the United States and NATO have effectively destroyed the regime of conventional arms control in Europe (we all remember who “stalled” the entry into force of the adapted Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty)) and the development of a new regime has been postponed indefinitely. In their attempts to accuse Russia of a “massive concentration” of its armed forces on the border with Ukraine, the United States and NATO seriously discredited the role of the Vienna Document 2011 and the Treaty on Open Skies as tools for objective control over military activities. Assessments of verification activities on the territories of Ukraine and Russia have been tailored to political orders, and the OSCE’s politico-military tools have been explicitly used as additional means of political pressure. As for the Treaty on Open Skies, its future is very uncertain.

There are also questions about the Alliance’s commitment to the non-deployment of substantial combat forces on the territory of its new member countries, as enshrined in the 1997 Founding Act. I wonder if NATO has considered how the aforementioned steps will affect the prospects for restoring conventional arms control in Europe? It is highly unlikely that this impact will prove positive.

As a consequence, the regime of conventional arms control in Europe today looks like a very sick person. There will have to be a major crisis, after which either death or a complete recovery will occur. The Russian Federation is making the necessary efforts to ensure that the arms control regime stays alive. We call on our negotiation partners to join these efforts.

Mr. Chairperson,

Should military confrontation decrease and the configurations of US and NATO forces in Europe return to pre-2013 levels, Russia would be open to working together on a new regime of conventional arms control in Europe that would reflect the new security realities and take into account the interests of all participating States, including the Russian Federation and its allies, and would also be less costly. We assume that the future of conventional arms control in Europe and CSBMs will be closely interlinked.

How can we create the necessary conditions for dialogue to begin? We could start with small but very important steps to stabilize the situation. For example, during a meeting on the margins of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Sergey Lavrov, again drew the attention of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to our concrete

proposals for de-escalation and incident prevention along the line of contact. Their implementation would restore an appropriate level of trust and normalize relations in the military sphere.

In addition, it is important to take advantage of the Structured Dialogue platform at our disposal to create the conditions for moving towards agreement on practical measures in the field of “hard” security. I emphasize we would not want to deal with a simulated readiness for real negotiations.

I should also like to express some concrete thoughts in connection with statements about the need to integrate a gender component into the future regime of conventional arms control in Europe. For us, these endeavours are completely incomprehensible. It seems that the only countries that harp on about gender equality are those that have serious problems in this area. We have no such problems. Our country prioritizes the competencies and personal qualities of employees rather than artificially ensuring that the percentage of men and women in security-related bodies is equal.

The Russian Federation is open to co-operation on the broad issue of ensuring politico-military stability on the basis of the principles of equal rights, mutual respect and consideration of interests. We are convinced that the OSCE participating States are capable of acting in a more intelligent and nuanced manner on security issues in order to prevent military confrontation from becoming entrenched as a norm of coexistence in Europe. The proposals we have heard today from the distinguished keynote speakers can serve as important reference points to that end. It is important to think seriously about how to put them into practice.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.