
Chairmanship: Azerbaijan**999th PLENARY MEETING OF THE FORUM**

1. Date: Wednesday, 2 February 2022 (in the Neuer Saal and via video teleconference)

Opened: 10.05 a.m.

Closed: 1.20 p.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador R. Sadigbayli
Mr. F. Osmanov

3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: SECURITY DIALOGUE: “MINE ACTION WITH THE FOCUS ON UNSCR 2365”

- *Presentation by Mr. S. Poladov, Deputy Chairman of the Board of the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA)*
- *Presentation by Mr. S. Essén, Global Mine Action and Development Adviser, Recovery Solution and Human Mobility Team, Crisis Bureau, UNDP*
- *Presentation by Mr. Ö. Buğra Gönen, Planning Expert, Turkish Mine Action Centre (TURMAC), Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Turkey*
- *Presentation by Ms. E. Becker, Executive Director, Marshall Legacy Institute*

Chairperson, Mr. S. Poladov (FSC.DEL/46/22 OSCE+), Mr. S. Essén (FSC.DEL/44/22 OSCE+), Mr. Ö. Buğra Gönen (FSC.DEL/47/22 OSCE+) (FSC.DEL/47/2/Add.1 OSCE+), Ms. E. Becker (FSC.DEL/45/22 OSCE+), France-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (FSC.DEL/40/22), Switzerland (FSC.DEL/37/22 OSCE+), United States of America (FSC.DEL/33/22 OSCE+), United Kingdom, Canada, Chairperson of

the Informal Group of Friends on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition (Latvia) (Annex 1), Turkey (FSC.DEL/36/22 OSCE+), Ukraine (FSC.DEL/39/22), Russian Federation (Annex 2), Armenia (Annex 3) (Annex 4), Azerbaijan (Annex 5), Egypt (Partner for Co-operation)

Agenda item 2: GENERAL STATEMENTS

Situation in and around Ukraine: Ukraine (FSC.DEL/38/22), France-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Georgia, Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (FSC.DEL/41/22), United States of America (FSC.DEL/34/22 OSCE+), United Kingdom (FSC.DEL/42/22 OSCE+), Canada, Russian Federation (Annex 6), Belarus

Agenda item 3: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (a) *Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting, to be held on 1 and 2 March 2022:* Chairperson
- (b) *Side event on “Humanitarian Mine Action: Challenges, Innovative Solutions and International Assistance”, being held at the Austrian National Defence Academy on 2 February 2022:* Chairperson
- (c) *1000th plenary meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation, to be held on 9 February 2022:* Chairperson
- (d) *25th anniversary of the Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control in accordance with Article IV of Annex I-B to the Dayton Agreement, observed on 14 June 2021:* Bosnia and Herzegovina (FSC.DEL/43/22 OSCE+)
- (e) *Announcement of financial contributions to various OSCE projects:* Switzerland, Montenegro
- (f) *Distribution of Victor-Yves Ghebali’s three-volume history of the OSCE to the participating States and Partners for Co-operation:* Switzerland

4. Next meeting:

Wednesday, 9 February 2022, at 10 a.m., in the Neuer Saal and via video teleconference



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Forum for Security Co-operation**

FSC.JOUR/1005
2 February 2022
Annex 1

Original: ENGLISH

999th Plenary Meeting

FSC Journal No. 1005, Agenda item 1

**STATEMENT BY
THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE INFORMAL GROUP OF FRIENDS ON
SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS AND STOCKPILES OF
CONVENTIONAL AMMUNITION (LATVIA)**

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Dear colleagues,

Distinguished speakers,

Today's Security Dialogue has once again drawn our attention to mine action activities and particularly to mine action's underlying humanitarian aspects. Today's speakers have highlighted several challenges relating to the implementation of our activities. In my capacity as Chairperson of the Informal Group of Friends on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition (SCA), I should like to thank the speakers for their valuable contributions on this important topic.

Mine action in the OSCE area has been discussed on numerous occasions within the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) in the last couple of years. In February 2021, for example, the US FSC Chairmanship increased our awareness of concerns and challenges related to explosive hazards in Central Asia. In January and May 2020 respectively, the Turkish and Ukrainian FSC Chairmanships devoted security dialogues to mine action, covering its normative and international regulation aspects and practical application measures, in particular in support of confidence- and security-building.

Mr. Chairperson,

The international normative framework in support of mine action is well developed. It includes humanitarian disarmament efforts under the Ottawa Convention and instruments relating to traditional arms control and international humanitarian law efforts such as Protocol II and V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. The fact that the latter has been signed by almost 90 per cent of the OSCE participating States is a strong indication of the measure of consensus on prohibiting or restricting the use of certain conventional weapons that "may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects", such as landmines.

United Nations Security Council resolution 2365 (2017), the first stand-alone resolution on mine action, recognizes the positive contribution that mine action activities make to stabilization and peace-sustainment efforts in the aftermath of conflict, and encourages States and organizations that are in a position to do so to remain actively engaged in the support of increased technical, advisory and operational capacity in mine action.

The OSCE is closely involved in mine action efforts at the global level. In particular, mine action is used by the OSCE as a confidence- and security-building measure in conflict prevention and resolution, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation. This important aspect of mine action serves to define our role and responsibilities, and guides our work within the FSC.

In our norm-setting efforts, we are progressively strengthening controls on SCA to ensure their safe and secure storage. Let me note here that the OSCE Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition provides the participating States with indicators to assess whether they have a surplus of conventional ammunition, explosive material and/or detonating devices, and if they do, information on how to initiate the process of destroying any such surpluses. For this purpose, the annual information exchange on SCA could be enhanced to serve us better.

Since 1997, the OSCE participating States have used a dedicated annual questionnaire to exchange information on their policies and practices regarding anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war. The information exchanged is publicly available on the OSCE website.¹ Although we can rightly take pride in the high rate of response to the questionnaire, we should explore further ways of increasing the practical utility of the information exchanged and intensify the practice of following up with the participating States that require assistance in mine clearance, stockpile destruction, mine awareness and/or victim assistance. In 2021, for example, the OSCE implemented assistance projects in support of mine action in two participating States. In Tajikistan, the OSCE supports regional training in explosive ordnance disposal with the participation of all five Central Asian participating States, thus not only contributing to development of sustainable national capacities but also building confidence among military forces and security and law-enforcement agencies in the region. Another participating State requested assistance in mine action in January 2021.

Furthermore, let me recall the second Biennial Meeting to Assess the Implementation of the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA of October 2020, where we recognized the need for a dedicated framework and comprehensive approach to safety and security in conventional ammunition management covering the supply chain and wider life-cycle management. To this end, it was suggested that an OSCE Plan of Action on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition be developed, which would help us to identify steps and milestones in countering the destabilizing accumulation and diversion of ammunition. I would like to commend Switzerland for having expressed its readiness to lead this activity at the last meeting of the Informal Group of Friends on SALW and SCA on 9 December 2021. The aim of the Plan of Action on SCA would be to ensure coherence and complementarity with the relevant United Nations frameworks, global norms and standards, and to put a spotlight on the OSCE's regional work in this field. I would like to emphasize

1 <https://www.osce.org/forum-for-security-cooperation/313921>.

that these endeavours are to be entirely transparent and that the OSCE participating States taking part in the document development process are to do so on an entirely voluntary basis.

Mr Chairperson,

Furthermore, I would like to emphasize the importance of the OSCE Best Practice Guides (BPGs) on SALW and conventional ammunition and the ongoing process of their review and updating. At the end of 2021, the FSC adopted decisions on three updated Best Practice Guides.

Let me reiterate that the BPGs, although not binding in nature, are endorsed and generally accepted by all 57 OSCE participating States and provide a common understanding of the relevant approaches, procedures and terminology. I would encourage participating States to consider whether similar guidance or a similar reference document might also be required in the field of mine action, giving particular consideration to the added value the OSCE can provide through its comprehensive approach to security and to confidence- and security-building.

To summarize, I believe that by further strengthening the implementation of SALW- and SCA-related norms and regulations, by linking them to our practical work, and by making better use of information exchanges, we would make a major contribution to enhancing the FSC's ability to tackle existing and emerging challenges posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices.

I thank you very much for your attention.

I kindly ask that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Forum for Security Co-operation**

FSC.JOUR/1005
2 February 2022
Annex 2

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

999th Plenary Meeting
FSC Journal No. 1005, Agenda item 1

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful to the Azerbaijani Chairmanship for having organized this plenary meeting on the issue of mines with the focus on United Nations Security Council resolution 2365 “Maintenance of international peace and security: Mine action”. We welcome the keynote speakers and thank them for their informative presentations.

The Russian Federation has historically attached great importance to the issue of demining, which is highly relevant in the context of resolving regional crises, dealing with their consequences and combating terrorism. Professional assistance in the field of mine clearance is required by many conflict-affected States in order to make a full transition to peaceful life and rebuild infrastructure and the economy. The OSCE’s assistance to countries in mine clearance should continue in a consistent manner, taking due account of its real capacity as a regional organization called upon to contribute to the implementation of global United Nations commitments.

Our country is making a responsible effort to create a world free of mines. Our approaches are being implemented under the Inhumane Weapons Convention and its Amended Protocol II on mines. The results of this work are reflected annually in national reporting under this Convention and in the responses by the Russian Federation to the OSCE Questionnaire on Anti-Personnel Mines and Explosive Remnants of War.

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) plays an important role in international demining efforts. Russian experts took part in the work organized by UNMAS to prepare international standards for countering the use of improvised explosive devices. We also support the work of the Service financially: a Russian Government order was signed in January allocating a voluntary contribution to finance an independent analysis of UNMAS’s work.

We attach great importance to assisting interested States with the conduct of humanitarian demining operations – among other things, by deploying teams of military engineers and explosives experts, together with the necessary equipment. We are actively

developing an exchange of experience with military deminers, primarily from Indonesia, Iran, Laos, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the United Arab Emirates and Vietnam. We maintain close co-operation with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining.

One of our priorities is mine clearance in Syria. During 2016–2017, Russian engineering troops conducted four large-scale humanitarian demining operations in the cities of Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor and Palmyra. We continue to assist the Syrians in clearing mines and explosive hazards in the areas that have been liberated from terrorists and extremists. Russian military experts have cleared more than 6,500 hectares of Syrian territory, around 1,400 km of roads and more than 17,000 objects, and defused more than 105,000 explosive hazards. As part of the branch of the International Mine Action Centre (IMAC) of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation deployed to Syria, our instructors have trained and equipped more than 1,200 Syrian deminers who continue to clear the territories liberated from the militants.

In South-East Asia, Russian engineering troops have been carrying out demining tasks in Laos since 2018. Over the past few years, more than 117 hectares of territory have been cleared, and more than 2,000 explosive hazards have been found and destroyed, the bulk of them being US-made aerial bombs. The IMAC detachment is currently participating in the fourth such operation in Laos and has begun training a new group of Laotian demining troops.

Demining is also an integral part of the peacekeeping operation in Nagorno-Karabakh, made possible by the agreements of the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia of 9 November 2020 on a complete ceasefire and termination of all hostilities. This work forms the basis for the establishment of a peaceful life. At the same time, we should like to emphasize in particular that special attention should be paid in the region to the co-ordination of assistance in demining so as to avoid duplication of activities by governmental and non-governmental organizations from different countries.

These systematic efforts by Russia are our practical contribution to the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 2365. We intend to continue to step up these efforts. We reiterate our openness to the exchange of professional experience with all interested countries, not least at IMAC and during the annual International Conference on Mine Clearance held in Moscow.

Mr. Chairperson,

A lot has been said today about the question of tackling the mine threat in south-eastern Ukraine, and we cannot sidestep this topic either. Let me begin by saying that our country values the work on mine risk awareness and outreach efforts within the community being performed by the Office of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine. We take the position that the Project Co-ordinator's activities, including extrabudgetary ones, should remain accountable to the OSCE participating States and that they should be in compliance with the mandate and take into account the agreements reached in the Trilateral Contact Group. Furthermore, we see a need for greater transparency in the work of the Co-ordinator, under whose auspices a number of different foreign organizations involved in mine clearance are operating.

We can see that the delegation of Ukraine is once again trying to present its country in a “blameless” light, shifting responsibility for all the troubles in Donbas on to the guarantor of a peaceful settlement. We are always ready to provide our esteemed colleagues with a mirror.

Year after year, at meetings of the Forum for Security Co-operation, we hear that no anti-personnel mines are being used in the territories controlled by the Ukrainian Government and that Ukraine’s obligations under the 1997 Ottawa Convention are being fulfilled in good faith. Nevertheless, year after year, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine reports the discovery of this type of mine in territories controlled by the Ukrainian Government. For example, four boxes of MON-90 mines were found at a Ukrainian armed forces checkpoint in Popasna on 24 April 2020 and an MON-90 mine at exactly the same location on 19 October 2021. What is more, the discovery of the latter was accompanied by a blatant lie to the monitors about its prompt removal.

These egregious discrepancies between what Ukraine’s representatives say and what actually happens on the ground are striking examples of how they regularly mislead the international community and undermine the efforts of international humanitarian organizations to clear mines in Donbas. We shall come back to this again.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.



999th Plenary Meeting

FSC Journal No. 1005, Agenda item 1

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF ARMENIA**

Dear colleagues,

The concept note for today's Security Dialogue describes mine action as "an indispensable element of sustainable peace, security and development, as well as of enjoyment of human rights". For almost thirty years, Azerbaijan has consistently obstructed any humanitarian demining activities in Nagorno-Karabakh, labelling them illegal. Azerbaijan has gone even further by blocking the extension of the mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan on unfounded accusations of the latter's engagement in demining activities in Nagorno-Karabakh. Unfortunately, the fact that landmines and other explosive ordnance posed a serious and indiscriminate threat to the life, security and livelihood of the people of Artsakh was not considered as a humanitarian issue either by Azerbaijan or by the OSCE. In this regard, I would like to recall that human rights are universal: they cannot be compromised for political considerations or applied selectively.

It should also be noted that the territories of Nagorno-Karabakh have been heavily contaminated with mines and other explosives by Azerbaijan since the time of the First Nagorno-Karabakh War. Moreover, throughout all these years, Azerbaijan has continued mine-laying activities, considering the use of landmines, booby-traps and other explosive devices as an "inalienable part of its defence strategy". This has been acknowledged by Azerbaijan itself in its official communications, including its 2020 response to the OSCE Questionnaire on Anti-Personnel Landmines (FSC.EMI/255/20).

In addition to obstructing any humanitarian demining activity in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan has consistently undermined efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. On the contrary, the Azerbaijani authorities have considered the use of force as the only means of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Refusal to engage constructively in negotiations within the agreed format of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs, continuous attempts to reduce the OSCE presence in the region, rejection of confidence- and security-building measures, and uncontrolled accumulation of weapons and ammunition, including mines and other explosives, are very indicative in this respect. Thus, Azerbaijan bears full responsibility for the current situation in the region, including with regard to mine contamination.

After the end of hostilities in November 2020, Armenia provided Azerbaijan with all mine maps in its possession as a humanitarian gesture. Unfortunately, our efforts to bring stability to our region have not been reciprocated by Azerbaijan. I think you will agree that the incursion and continued illegal presence of Azerbaijan's armed forces in the sovereign territory of Armenia, the continued detention of Armenian prisoners of war and civilian hostages, the ongoing violations of the ceasefire and shelling of civilian settlements in Armenia and Artsakh, and the destruction and appropriation of Armenian cultural heritage cannot be regarded as indications of Azerbaijan's readiness to build trust and confidence.

Dear colleagues,

Allow me also to add a few words about the OSCE assistance mechanism and Azerbaijan's request for practical assistance in the field of explosive hazards risk reduction.

For many years, Azerbaijan has consistently obstructed co-operation between Armenia and the OSCE, also in the field of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA), and has single-handedly blocked activities and projects with unfounded claims about their conflict-related nature. Back in 2015, the Republic of Armenia, in line with the OSCE Document on SCA, submitted a request to the OSCE for assistance in implementing a project in the field of SALW and SCA aimed at improving the safety standards of two SALW/SCA storage sites in the Republic of Armenia in accordance with OSCE best practices. The process was suspended due to the politicized and non-constructive position of the delegation of Azerbaijan, which repeatedly stated that Azerbaijan was not in a position to support any assistance project requested by Armenia (FSC.DEL/171/20). The unwillingness and failure of the Organization and its participating States to condemn such practices and denounce such irresponsible behaviour have already undermined the effectiveness of the OSCE in this field.

What we are witnessing today is an attempt by Azerbaijan to abuse the OSCE assistance mechanism for the sake of political manipulation and to share with the OSCE the burden of the consequences of its own deliberate actions and refusal of a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Any conflict-related activity by the OSCE can be carried out only on an equal basis, with the involvement of all parties to the conflict, including Artsakh.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Forum for Security Co-operation**

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**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF ARMENIA**

In exercising its right of reply to the delegation of Azerbaijan, the delegation of Armenia would like to stress the following.

Firstly, Armenia never denied the existence of landmine maps. What Armenia rejected was Azerbaijan's trade-off proposal, that is, the prisoners of war for the landmine maps.

Secondly, the references to the inaccuracy of the landmine maps just reflect another narrative invented by Azerbaijan to blame Armenia.

Thirdly, regarding the claim that Azerbaijan never blocked the Armenian project proposal in the field of small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition, this is an open lie, as can be seen from the statement of the delegation of Azerbaijan of 9 September 2020 under the reference number FSC.DEL/171/20.



999th Plenary Meeting

FSC Journal No. 1005, Agenda item 1

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF AZERBAIJAN**

Mr. Chairperson,

Similar to the previous Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) meeting under the Chairmanship of Azerbaijan, it was not our intention to take the floor. But given Armenia's another misstatement, we are compelled to do so in our national capacity. We see that the delegation of Armenia has set a clear goal before itself – to disrupt the Chairmanship of Azerbaijan in the FSC. Needless to say that this is counterproductive and ill-suited to the purposes of this Forum.

Armenia is the sole country responsible for the current alarming situation in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan caused by mass contamination of these areas with landmines and unexploded ordnance. For three decades, during the occupation of these territories, Armenia has indiscriminately planted landmines therein and transformed them into one of the most contaminated areas in the world. Today, persistent mines planted by Armenia continue killing civilians, create additional obstacles for the return of internally displaced persons, seriously impede wide-ranging rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts and undermine the overall process of post-conflict normalization and reconciliation.

Since the conflict came to an end in November 2020, Armenia first rejected having any maps of the minefields calling it a “fake agenda”, then refused to hand over these maps, but ultimately had to release them in a piecemeal fashion due to international pressure. Making matters worse, once examined by field specialists, it turned out that the submitted information was incomplete covering only a part of the liberated territories, a significant part of the maps was unreliable, while others contained no information pertinent to demining. Therefore, Armenia should be held to account for refusing to hand over complete and accurate information about the minefields, share the burden of demining costs and co-operate on providing assistance to the victims.

Azerbaijan's practical assistance request, referred to by the Armenian delegation, should be viewed in this context as well. Firstly, the request is made in full compliance with our shared commitments in the field of small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition. Secondly and most importantly, assistance is requested to implement the project on Azerbaijan's sovereign internationally recognized territories, which

were under Armenian occupation for nearly three decades and which are currently in a dire need for post-conflict rehabilitation, of which humanitarian demining is an essential part. This is the bottom line and the main difference from illegal activities which were pursued by Armenia in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

The least Armenia could do to somehow rectify its aforementioned internationally wrongful acts is not to impede but facilitate the realization of the assistance project requested by Azerbaijan.

Since Armenia also raised the issue of its assistance request, let me remind the Forum that Azerbaijan has never blocked it. Proceeding from our well-known legitimate security concerns, we demanded that all procedures are duly fulfilled, and transparency and accountability related to the project are ensured in line with the relevant OSCE documents.

Lastly, a few words on the Ottawa Convention. Azerbaijan supports the philosophy, purposes and objectives of the Ottawa Convention and continues to make contributions to the implementation of the Convention's goals. Azerbaijan provided transparency reports under Article 7 of the Convention and will submit a new report in the coming time. Moreover, Azerbaijan has also consistently voted in favour of resolutions on the implementation of the Ottawa Convention at the UN General Assembly. Whereas, Armenia's continued destructive policy and posture go against the Ottawa Convention's philosophy and objectives and create practical difficulties in the region.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Forum for Security Co-operation**

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Annex 6

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999th Plenary Meeting
FSC Journal No. 1005, Agenda item 2

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

Mr. Chairperson,

Time and time again, I have tried to refrain from responding to the false and malicious rhetoric of the Ukrainians and their Western masters, but today I cannot keep silent. Normal people are extremely puzzled by the level of hysteria whipped up by Western politicians, diplomats and journalists about an alleged “imminent Russian invasion of Ukraine”.

Esteemed colleagues, take pity on the Ukrainian people and their President. These unfortunate people already live as in George Orwell’s *1984*: under the “constant threat of war with their neighbours”, which the Ukrainian Government uses to justify a most difficult internal political and economic situation, and a civil war that has already gone on for eight years. It is time to stop using Ukraine so cynically and blatantly against Russia, what is more at the cost even of intimidating the Ukrainian regime itself. Why all these evacuations of diplomatic missions from Kyiv and other cities? President Zelenskyy went as far as having to contradict himself during a press conference on 28 January, stating that the situation at the border was “no worse than before”.

Diplomats from some Western countries are being evacuated. This is surprising not only to Russia but also to the Ukrainian leadership. What are they threatened by? They say “a possible attack by Russia”. They refer to the supposed build-up of Russian and Belarusian armed forces on Ukraine’s borders. They are not embarrassed in the least by the fact that our countries can conduct exercises on their territories at any place and at any time. We have had the courtesy to inform our partners here at the Forum recently on a voluntary basis about the inspection of the Union State’s response forces.

In fact, with this misinformation, the Anglo-Saxons continue to actively “pump” Ukraine with lethal weapons and provide financial and material support to the regime, with no concern for what is happening in Ukraine and the number of lives that the eight-year conflict in Donbas has already claimed and may continue to do.

It has long been obvious to all that the West is cynically using our Ukrainian neighbour as yet another tool to contain and exert pressure on Russia. It is only surprising

that United States and NATO functionaries are still fascinated by the theories of Zbigniew Brzezinski in his book *The Grand Chessboard*: this work of political prose is already 25 years old and has been relegated to the “dustbin” of history.

Nor do we rule out the consideration that this kind of activity in order to whip up hysteria and panic could be used to cover up possible provocations by the Ukrainian armed forces and the nationalist battalions on the line of contact in Donbas. Let me remind you that Russia has stated at the highest level that we have no plans to “invade” Ukraine. But we will not allow our interests to be roughly trampled upon, let alone ignored.

By raising the level of tension, the Anglo-Saxons, particularly the United States of America, are also trying to divert attention away from the need to give us concrete answers to the major questions posed by Russia – regarding the unacceptability of NATO expansion, the non-deployment of offensive weapons on the territory of Ukraine and Georgia, and a return to the 1997 *status quo ante*. We found no satisfactory answers regarding security guarantees in the messages presented by the authorities in Washington and Brussels on 26 January. This was made clear yesterday at the highest level.

We are also awaiting a reaction to the question posed in the address by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to his OSCE colleagues: how do our partners understand their commitment not to strengthen their own security at the expense of the security of other States on the basis of adherence to the principle of the indivisibility of security?

We assume that responses will be forthcoming in a national capacity, since the commitment in question was made by each State individually and not on behalf of alliances or blocs.

Possibilities for further work on security guarantees, taking into account the existing proposals, continue to be explored.

We also expect Western leaders to use their channels of influence on the Ukrainian leadership as soon as possible, not to make it extremely nervous but to ensure paragraph-by-paragraph implementation of the Minsk agreements in the sequence in which they were formulated and signed. The familiar excuse that “this will lead to the destruction of Ukraine”, voiced time and again by its leadership, is not acceptable to us. *Pacta sunt servanda*.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the meeting.