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United States Mission to the OSCE
U.S. Statement for the
Forum for Security Cooperation:
Agenda Item 2: General Statements

As delivered by Arms Control Counselor Daniel Wartko
September 28, 2022

Good Afternoon Mr. Chair,

The United States reiterates our condemnation of Russia's brutal war of aggression against Ukraine, and we continue to stand with Ukraine and its people. The United States, our allies, and partners in the international community have provided Ukraine consistent and significant support for its defense, and we will continue that steadfast support for the Ukrainian people for as long as it takes. We have every confidence that the people of Ukraine will continue to demonstrate resolve and bravery on the battlefield in support of their sovereignty and independence.

The developments of the past week make one thing very clear: Russia is losing this war, and it knows it. Russia is failing. And when its professional army proved incapable of taking Kyiv or even Kharkiv (a mere 30 km from the Russian border), President Putin supplemented his forces first with mercenaries and then with criminals. And now, rather than acknowledge the additional recent failures of the Russian forces driven back by the Ukrainian defenders, Putin has doubled down on his blunder and gone back on his promise to the Russia people by ordering a mobilization of 300,000 reservists. Russia has laid bare to the world that its army is failing, and that it desperately needs more soldiers. This question was raised last week, but there has been no response, so it is worth asking again. If Russia has lost only 5,937 soldiers – as claimed by its Ministry of Defense – then why does it need to conscript an additional 300,000? What makes this move even more tragic for the Russian people is that the Kremlin is conscripting its unwilling citizens knowing that it lacks the time, inclination, or resources to properly train or equip them to be anything but cannon fodder. The Russian people evidently know the truth, and even now, flights out of Russia are completely booked, lines at border crossings out of Russia are growing, and the Russian response has been to ban all men aged 18 to 65 from commercial flights, essentially keeping the Russian people hostage in their own country and forcing them to fight in Putin's war of choice. As the growing chorus of voices around the world agrees, the only off-ramp for Putin and his regime is to end this war now, withdraw his forces outside

the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine, and enter into good-faith negotiations with Ukraine to establish a lasting peace in Europe.

Russia must also abandon its fraudulent referendum and annexation efforts, which are an affront to the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity that underpin international peace and wellbeing. The United States will never recognize Russia's annexation of any territory it illegally seized from Ukraine. Any such territory remains part of Ukraine, just as Crimea does. And Russia's machinations and its reckless threats involving nuclear weapons violate the tenets of the international arms control framework and serve to only escalate tensions. Russia must choose to return to diplomacy as the means to resolve its political differences and deescalate tensions in the region.

In the spirit of diplomacy, the United States welcomes the negotiated prisoner exchange between Ukraine and Russia, which included two U.S. citizens captured while serving in Ukraine's military. We appreciate the impartiality of Ukraine to include all prisoners of war, regardless of nationality, in its negotiations, and we look forward to these U.S. citizens being reunited with their families. Initiatives such as these are evidence that diplomacy still works and is still the only means to end this war. We join our colleagues here in demanding that Russia immediately release the three OSCE SMM staff members who have been unjustifiably detained since the spring and held in conditions unknown to their families. And we condemn in the strongest possible terms the so-called "legal" proceedings initiated against two of them and remind Russia that those monitors still enjoy protection as OSCE staff.

Mr. Chair,

Russia's war of choice in Ukraine, in which Belarus is complicit, is destabilizing eastern and southeastern Europe as well as Central Asia and the Caucasus. Russia's abandonment of the goals and principles upon which this organization was founded, including adherence to international law, are encouraging others to follow its lead in choosing violence over diplomacy. Russia lit this match of violence in Ukraine, and now the fire it has stoked is spreading throughout the region. We have already seen the destabilizing impact of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine spread to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. As Secretary Blinken recently stated at the United Nations, which is just as applicable in this forum, "The very international order that we have

gathered here to uphold is being shredded before our eyes. We cannot – we will not – allow President Putin to get away with it.”

Thank you, Mr. Chair.