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MC.DEL/3/21/Corr.1  
2 December 2021

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

**STATEMENT BY  
MR. SERGEY LAVROV, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE TWENTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE  
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Stockholm, 2 December 2021

Madam Chairperson-in-Office  
Madam Secretary General,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

The coronavirus pandemic has tested the global economy and international relations. We are endeavouring – collectively wherever possible – to overcome emerging problems and to adapt to the new realities. The OSCE’s role is essential here too. I am pleased that one of the few documents we are adopting today concerns the climate. We need to be more active when it comes to the pandemic.

There has been no progress on the key task facing our Organization, namely strengthening co-operative security rather than confrontation.

The goal outlined by our leaders at the Astana Summit in 2010 – the formation of an equal, comprehensive and indivisible security community – remains valid.

The OSCE is in a depressing state today. It has become hostage to the bloc-based discipline within the European Union and NATO and is mired in petty agendas.

Our Western partners seek to replace international law with a “rules-based order”, which they themselves are establishing on the basis of their own “exceptionalism”. We increasingly hear calls to break the consensus rule, but without it our Organization will lose its uniqueness and value as a platform for equitable co-operation among all the participants. The “effective multilateralism” that our partners love to make the case for will not work if one group of countries puts itself above the others and applies the methods of pressure and unfair competition – be it vaccine diplomacy, fake news campaigns in the media or illegal sanctions – against those who disagree with it. “Liberal values” are being instrumentalized for shameless interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States.

In a broader sense, a black and white model of bipolar confrontation is being reproduced on a new political and ideological basis. The fall of the Berlin Wall marked the end of the Cold War and the cessation of the struggle between two systems. Now, new walls are being erected by those who proclaimed themselves “civilized democracies” and consider it their mission to contain “authoritarian regimes”. “Everything for man, everything for his sake” they declare in the European Union, and at the same time they plan to build a 180 km long, 5.5 m high wall topped with barbed wire so as to fence themselves off from women and

children in the Belarusian forest. The final act of burying the “détente”. Everyone stands to lose from dividing lines in Europe and Eurasia.

The strategic stability architecture is rapidly disintegrating. NATO refuses to give constructive consideration to our proposals for de-escalating tensions and preventing dangerous incidents. On the contrary, the Alliance’s military infrastructure is being irresponsibly moved closer to Russia’s borders, and anti-missile defence systems that could be used for missile strikes are being deployed in Romania and Poland. US medium-range missiles can appear any day now on European territory. The “nightmare” scenario of military confrontation that our continent experienced after the famous NATO Double-Track Decision is returning. Europe remains silent. Ukraine is being “pumped up” militarily, which fuels the Ukrainian Government’s desire to sabotage the Minsk agreements and fosters the illusion that the conflict can be resolved by force.

The decision of the NATO Bucharest Summit of April 2008 that “Georgia and Ukraine will become members of NATO” was like a landmine placed beneath the very foundations of the European security architecture. It has already exploded once, in August 2008, when Mikheil Saakashvili, euphoric about the prospect of joining NATO, took a gamble that had dire consequences for Georgia itself and brought the security situation in Europe to a knife-edge. Those who mechanically repeat the points made in Bucharest and insist that “third countries” have no right to express their position on the issue of NATO enlargement are playing with fire. I am convinced that they cannot be unaware of this.

I should like to make it very clear: the transformation of our neighbouring countries into a bridgehead for confrontation with Russia and the deployment of NATO forces in the immediate vicinity of areas of strategic importance to our security are absolutely unacceptable. I draw attention to the statement by the Permanent Council of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) of 30 November this year, which stresses the inadmissibility of provocative military activity in territories adjacent to the zone of responsibility of the CSTO member countries.

Security is either indivisible or non-existent. The political commitments of the OSCE participating States – to strive for equal and indivisible security, not to strengthen their security at the expense of the security of others, to take into account the legitimate security interests of other States when determining how to ensure their own security – are enshrined in such fundamental documents as the Helsinki Final Act, the CSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, the Charter for European Security and the Astana declaration.

The time has come to translate these valid words into long-term, legally binding security guarantees – this is a vital prerequisite for preventing the slide towards a confrontational scenario.

At the ceremony for the presentation of credentials on 1 December this year, Russian President Vladimir Putin stressed: “We are not demanding any special terms for ourselves. We understand that any agreements must take into account the interests of both Russia and all other States in the Euro-Atlantic region. A calm and stable situation should be ensured for everyone and is needed by all without exception.” He also noted the following: “In dialogue with the United States and its allies, we will insist on the elaboration of concrete agreements that would rule out any further eastward expansion of NATO and the deployment of weapons systems posing a threat to us in close proximity to Russia’s territory.” We will be submitting the relevant proposals in the near future. We expect them to be considered seriously in terms of their substance and with no evasion. We think that the OSCE can play a very useful role here.

The OSCE's conflict resolution potential is required. The Organization should send a clear signal to the Ukrainian Government that it is unacceptable to revise the Minsk agreements, which are the sole framework for a settlement. The internal Ukrainian crisis will not be overcome as long as the current regime in Kyiv balks at fulfilling its obligations under international law, at engaging in direct dialogue with the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk and at granting these territories a special status enshrined in the Constitution. Attempts to "renegotiate" the key provisions of the Minsk agreements are a recipe for disaster. We are distributing today the text of the Minsk Package of Measures and the declaration by the leaders of France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine adopted in support of that package, along with the United Nations Security Council resolution endorsing these documents. It will be useful for participating States to refresh their memory of these documents. It would not hurt either to familiarize themselves once again with the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, including the need for direct dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk. This mandate needs to be implemented fully, in all its aspects, without preconceived one-sided interpretations, as the Mission's leadership is clearly guilty of.

The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe was convened in the 1970s in a difficult international environment. The political will of the participating States for change and their willingness to make difficult compromises made it possible to agree on the foundations of a fundamentally new security architecture. Today, it is incumbent on all of us to return to those foundations and to reaffirm our commitment to the spirit of Helsinki. Only such a mutually respectful, unifying approach will allow us to preserve the Organization and open up its potential as a decision-making platform on fundamental issues of security and co-operation.

I should like to wish everyone the best of health, thank the Swedish Chairmanship and wish our Polish colleagues every success as the future OSCE Chairmanship.