

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXEY MESHKOV,
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN
FEDERATION, AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE 2016 ANNUAL
SECURITY REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Vienna, 28 June 2016

Mr. Chairperson,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We regard the OSCE Annual Security Review Conference as a vital platform for dialogue on the entire range of threats to security and for a review of the work of the Organization and its participating States in this area.

We are looking forward to frank discussion of all contemporary challenges to European security. To put it baldly, the current state of affairs is depressing. The high price being paid for the absence of a stable and effective security architecture uniting the countries of the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions on the basis of the principle of the indivisibility of security is becoming increasingly evident.

NATO's interaction with Russia today is based openly on the logic of confrontation. There is no other way to interpret the Alliance's policy of building up its military capabilities on the "eastern flank" and the official strategy of "containing" Russia. This is a clear encroachment on the foundations of security in Europe. Unprecedented militarization of Central and Eastern Europe is taking place. Practically all NATO countries have increased their military spending. The Alliance is conducting unreasonably large-scale military exercises. Only this month, 50,000 troops from NATO and partner countries took part simultaneously in the Anakonda 2016 exercise, the largest since 1989, at the same time as naval manoeuvres near the Russian border. We are constantly hearing plans for a "permanent military presence" from the leaders of the Alliance. The military infrastructure is being actively developed with the deployment of rapid reaction forces and setting up of front-line co-ordination centres and stores.

The strategic situation in Europe is also complicated by plans by the United States of America to deploy a missile defence system in Europe. It is revealing that the United States Government does not intend to change its anti-missile plans in spite of the progress in the talks on Iran's nuclear programme.

Against this background, the NATO countries are proposing to Russia to work on the "substantive modernization" of the Vienna Document 2011, into which they are essentially

inserting measures to improve the transparency of Russian armed forces. It sounds like a “theatre of the absurd”. I should like to remind you that it is impossible to build up transparency in an atmosphere of confrontation, political sanctions and the rejection of military co-operation. A new conventional arms control system can be established only on the basis of reciprocity, respect for national interests and equal and indivisible security for all. Confidence-building measures and the arms control regime must be considered as a whole.

We nevertheless continue to hope that common sense will prevail in NATO. We are counting on our Western partners finding the strength to refrain from developing confrontational plans and thinking about joining forces with Russia to safeguard global and regional security. A good example is the joint activities to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in Syria.

Distinguished Conference participants,

We hope during this forum for comprehensive discussion on ways to improve the OSCE’s capacity to combat international terrorism and illicit trafficking in narcotics and also on responding to threats emanating from beyond the perimeters of the OSCE area.

International experience demonstrates the inadmissibility of double standards and the classification of terrorists as “bad” and “not so bad”. Islamic State and other groups like Al-Nusrah Front did not appear of their own accord. They were helped by the short-sighted use of extremist movements to attain opportunistic, political and geopolitical aims, including combating “undesirable” regimes. This policy has led to chaos and the destabilization of whole regions and to rampant terrorism. Russia calls for the formation of a genuinely united front to combat terror, with a central role being played by the United Nations, on the basis of the norms and principles of international law, including the principles of equality, sovereignty of States and non-interference in internal affairs.

Anti-terrorist and anti-drug activities are one of the key focuses of the OSCE’s work. The OSCE Secretariat works to promote the successful fulfilment by States of their commitments in these areas and carries out important projects. One of them is being implemented with Russia. Since 2008 we have been training narcotics police from Afghanistan in Domodedovo near Moscow. A training centre in St. Petersburg is near completion and courses will be organized there for students from Serbia. The regular conferences by the OSCE Chairmanship on combating terrorism and drugs make an important contribution to our joint efforts. I should like once again to call for consideration to be given to the creation of a separate department within the OSCE Secretariat devoted to combating the drug threat. We believe that a structure of this nature would be highly desirable.

At last year’s Ministerial Council meeting in Belgrade, our ministers adopted important documents on combating terrorism and radicalization and dealing with the world drug problem. We believe that these efforts by the OSCE should be continued and that a comprehensive package of decisions should be agreed upon in time for the Ministerial Council meeting in Hamburg. We agree with the proposals of the German Chairmanship that the OSCE should be involved in the International Civil Aviation Organization initiative regarding the exchange of detailed information on airline passengers so as to control the movement of foreign terrorist fighters. I should also like to draw attention to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly draft resolution prepared by the Russian Special Representative of

the Assembly President on Anti-Terrorism Nikolay Kovalev on the equipping of passenger aircraft with video monitoring equipment for security purposes. We hope that the resolution will be adopted at the session in Tbilisi from 1 to 5 July.

We note the important work of the OSCE on confidence-building in information and communication technologies. An addition was agreed in March to the initial set of confidence-building measures. There is now a need to concentrate efforts on implementing these measures rather than enlarging them.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is a long list of unresolved conflicts in the OSCE's area of responsibility with many "sore spots", including Kosovo, Transdniestria, Nagorno-Karabakh and Donbas.

The key principles in the peaceful settlement of conflicts remain the peaceful reconciliation of differences, the involvement of all parties and a circumspect attitude to existing negotiation formats and instruments. It is also important, particularly in the early stages of conflicts, not to cross the line between preventive diplomacy "services" and interference in internal political processes.

I should like particularly to emphasize the principle of involvement of all parties. It is impossible to reconcile differences by listening to only one side. We need to invite to the OSCE platform not only representatives of Kosovo, as has been done recently without prior consultation and contrary to the opinion of a number of countries, but also representatives of the parties involved in other conflicts in the OSCE area.

The situation in Kosovo today remains complex. International presences, including the OSCE Mission, talk of internal political instability, the vulnerability of ethnic minorities, particularly Serbs, politicization of the judicial system, corruption and crime. This indicates that the OSCE needs to remain involved in Kosovo. The OSCE Mission should continue to work within the legal framework of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 and take into account the results of the dialogue between Belgrade and Priština under the aegis of the European Union. It is unacceptable for the Mission to get entangled in non-core projects, notably supporting the Euro-Atlantic integration of the territory. The OSCE's resources should be used to resolve the real critical problems.

We welcome the OSCE's efforts to help resolve the conflict in the east of Ukraine and the work of Ambassador Martin Sajdik, co-ordinator of the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, (SMM) and his Principal Deputy Alexander Hug. Key features of the settlement are implementation of the political aspects of the Minsk Package of Measures, granting special status to Donbas, amnesty, constitutional reform and the holding of local elections. We note the complex situation along the line of contact. The main problem remains provocation by the Ukrainian armed forces, their occupation of "grey zones" and advance to militia positions, and the disappearance of military equipment from depots. We support the SMM's efforts to disengage the sides, create demilitarized zones, and organize round-the-clock monitoring of these zones and of places where arms subject to withdrawal are stored.

We are extremely pleased to note the official resumption of work in the Transdniestrian settlement process by the Permanent Conference in the "5+2" format after a

two-year pause. We hope that the German Chairmanship will continue its efforts to foster this positive movement. We assume that the Ukrainian Government, having appointed its new special representative, will continue to observe its international obligations as one of the two guarantors and as a mediator in the negotiating process.

Russia plays an active role in settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We were extremely concerned at the escalation of military activity around Nagorno-Karabakh at the beginning of April and did our utmost to bring about a ceasefire. As Co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, we will continue to co-operate as mediators with the Governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan. The meeting of the Heads of State of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia in Strelna on 20 June was an important stabilizing element. We trust that this positive dynamic in the dialogue will not only calm the situation but also enable progress to be made in the settlement process. In the same vein, we support the initiative to strengthen the role of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk.

We also note the co-chairmanship of the OSCE, together with the United Nations and the European Union, in the Geneva International Discussions on security in Transdniestria. The conclusion of legally binding agreements on the non-use of force by Georgia and Abkhazia with South Ossetia is a top-priority goal. This topic is becoming all the more relevant in the light of efforts by the Georgian Government to destabilize the situation through its rapprochement with NATO and build-up of its offensive military capabilities. The effectiveness of the Geneva International Discussions is undermined by the submission every year by Georgia of a politicized draft resolution to the United Nations General Assembly regarding refugees and internally displaced persons. Representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are denied the opportunity to present their position to members of the General Assembly because the United States authorities refuse to issue visas to them. It is meaningless to discuss such issues in their absence.

Distinguished colleagues,

The state of affairs in regions adjacent to the OSCE area is disquieting. The development of the situation in Afghanistan gives cause for serious concern, particularly the increase in membership and activity of international terrorist groups, extremists and fundamentalists. The OSCE's work in the Mediterranean region is no less important. The Mediterranean has become a major source of instability.

It will be important during the Conference to give exhaustive consideration to the causes and ways of resolving the unprecedented migration crisis that has engulfed the countries of the European Union. The mass migration of refugees, particularly from the Middle East and North Africa, has been to a large extent the result of short-sighted interference in the internal affairs of States with a view to destabilizing them and overthrowing unwanted governments by force. The fundamental task today is to remove the original causes of the crisis, above all through peaceful settlements in Syria, Libya and Iraq.

Realization of the importance of this problem is also gradually taking place in the OSCE. No fewer than three draft resolutions on migration were submitted at the session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Tbilisi. In March a conference on migration was held successfully during the OSCE Security Days in Rome. We support the resultant recommendations and hope that they will be reflected in the actions of the OSCE executive

structures in practice. We believe that our Organization could make a contribution to coping with this crisis.

Distinguished colleagues,

We trust that, in spite of the different approaches by the OSCE countries to building a pan-European security architecture, the political will to seek compromise solutions to the problems and ways of countering threats and challenges will prevail. It should not be forgotten that it is precisely the mission of the OSCE to bridge dividing lines and agree on activities to combat the challenges faced by us all.

Russia is willing for its part to engage in respectful and constructive dialogue aimed at developing pan-European security and co-operation.

I hope that this Conference will produce fruitful work.

Thank you for your attention.