

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.

PC.DEL/1323/22
23 September 2022
ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1390th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 September 2022

On the implications of the European Union’s anti-Russian policy for international efforts to counter climate change

Mr. Chairperson,

Russia seeks to maintain a constructive spirit in the work performed under the OSCE’s economic and environmental dimension. We are pleased that at the Ministerial Council meeting in Stockholm it proved possible to adopt Decision No. 3/21 on strengthening co-operation to address the challenges caused by climate change. The OSCE’s supporting role in the global climate action process, where the United Nations plays the central role, was thus defined more clearly.

We consider it essential to intensify co-operation in this field among the participating States in line with the existing mandate. In particular, we should like to recall paragraph 2 in the operative part of the decision, whereby the participating States are encouraged “to integrate climate considerations into national or domestic strategy, planning, documents and processes, in order to mitigate and build resilience against the impacts of climate change”.

The European Union continues to publicly profess its alleged commitment to the obligation to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 and to the interim target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030 relative to 1990 levels. However, EU officials are trying to deny the obvious as they seek to convince Europeans and the global community as a whole that the steps taken will not have negative consequences for the international efforts to counter climate change. In her statement in Davos in May 2022, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said that the current EU strategy was, as she put it, “to phase out Russian fossil fuels” and at the same time “fast forward the green transition”.

The policy adopted by the European Union since the start of Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine, consisting in an accelerated shift away from Russian energy – which involves, among other things, using more carbon-intensive alternatives – will inevitably lead to a significant increase in global greenhouse gas emissions. Thus, the levels of use of the most carbon-rich fossil fuel, coal, are rising steeply in the EU. Despite all those statements and also a record increase in prices, the volume of coal imports by the EU did not go down in the first five months of 2022. As estimated by the International Energy Agency (IEA), coal consumption by the electricity sector in the EU increased by 16 per cent in the first half of 2022. Many

EU member countries have already extended the lifetimes of their coal-fired power plants, including Greece and the Czech Republic. Romania has decided to reopen closed coal plants. This possibility is also being discussed in Italy. The decision to restrict the output of coal-fired power plants in the Netherlands has been revoked. Germany has announced plans to reduce the share of gas in its energy balance by using coal, and it intends to continue operating its coal plants, including the least energy-efficient ones.

Gas is also being actively replaced with oil products. According to the IEA, the use of oil to generate electricity has increased in a number of EU member countries, including Germany, Spain, Italy and Portugal, as a result of an anomalously hot season.

In view of potential gas shortages, European businesses are looking for a way out of the crisis, which most often entails the use of more carbon-rich fuels. In particular, the German company BASF, which has its own power generation capacity and supplies electricity to a significant proportion of its enterprises, is currently refitting these to run on oil instead of gas. A number of companies, such as Henkel and Evonik, have adjusted their measures for the phasing out of coal by extending the lifetimes of coal-fired furnaces and plants that had been due to be shut down.

The European Union's striving to replace Russian energy at all costs is leading to increased fossil fuel extraction around the world. Contrary to the EU authorities' professed willingness to facilitate the decarbonization of the global economy, the European Union is prompting certain third countries, including developing countries, to step up their shipments of fossil fuels to the EU. In this context the high-sounding statements by the EU about its intention to assist developing countries in abandoning coal-based power come across as particularly hypocritical. The demands by the EU authorities that developing countries turn away from uncontrolled coal-fired power generation and adopt high ambitions for the climate do not square with the actions of the EU member countries themselves.

Such actions risk leading to an underfunding of "green" infrastructure in third countries and increasing their dependence on fossil fuels. In particular, in line with the memorandum of understanding signed by the EU with Egypt and Israel on 15 June 2022 on co-operation related to trade, transport and the export of natural gas, the EU authorities intend to "encourage ... European companies to invest in natural gas exploration and production in Israel and Egypt". A similar memorandum of understanding was concluded with Azerbaijan in July 2022.

Moreover, the European Union does not pledge to guarantee that infrastructure created to meet EU industrial needs will be in demand in the foreseeable future and that it will not turn into stranded assets. The possibility of using such infrastructure for the transport of hydrogen fuel is for now only being discussed. According to experts from the European branch of Climate Action Network, a coalition of environmental non-governmental organizations, this EU policy is causing the burden of the European energy transition to be shifted on to the countries that are suffering the most from the consequences of climate change.

In its attempts to replace Russian energy, the European Union is behaving aggressively in global energy markets and "snatching away" raw materials from third countries, mostly developing countries. These are consequently faced with an aggravation of the problem of energy poverty and are forced to use cheaper and, as a rule, more carbon-intensive alternatives.

The European Union's high-sounding statements about its readiness to provide developing countries with financial assistance for the implementation of their climate policies are likewise belied by its actions. By the end of 2022 the EU will have paid an excess of about 260 billion euros for gas imports relative to 2021. A similar sum, namely 280 billion euros, has already been earmarked by the governments of

EU member countries as energy subsidies for their own consumers, which is almost three times greater than the assistance promised by the West to developing countries for the purpose of achieving climate goals.

Plans are being implemented to replace Russian pipeline gas with liquefied natural gas (LNG) from, in particular, the United States of America, Qatar and Egypt. According to the IEA, in June 2022 the United States for the first time overtook Russia in terms of the volume of gas supplied to the EU. Construction of new LNG import terminals is under way, notably in Germany, Italy, Greece and the Netherlands. LNG shipments also have a big carbon footprint. There are significant emissions due to the energy consumed in cooling down the gas to a liquid state, transporting it on ships over long distances and then regasifying it. Thus, the increase in the supply of LNG from the United States to Europe in the first six months of 2022 has already led to an increase in emissions equivalent to 13 million tonnes of carbon dioxide.

Additionally, during LNG production and transportation leaks of methane are more common – a gas that in the short term has a far greater impact on global warming than carbon dioxide. These steps are likewise contrary to the objectives stated by the EU authorities with regard to reducing methane emissions, not least under the Global Methane Pledge.

It is intended to step up US gas supply to the European Union above all by increasing the extraction of shale gas, which is carried out by means of hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”), a process that is very environmentally unsound and that runs counter to the EU’s professed aspirations regarding environmental protection. Moreover, the option of extracting such gas on EU territory itself, in particular in Germany, is being explored. It is a topic that is currently being widely discussed, notwithstanding the obvious negative consequences of this process for the environment (the use of fracking can lead to the contamination of groundwater by chemicals, local earthquakes, the destruction of ecosystems and a deterioration in people’s living conditions; it requires the pumping of considerable amounts of water).

International efforts to combat climate change are also being negatively affected by the European Union’s unprecedented anti-Russian sanctions, which are aimed at undermining the Russian economy, including technological development in such key sectors as energy, transport and industry. The EU authorities are essentially trying to limit the Russian Federation’s chances of attaining the climate-related objectives that we have set ourselves, which include achieving climate neutrality by 2060.

In this way, as it attempts to free itself from “energy dependence” on Russia, the European Union is falling into the trap of LNG, which is more carbon-intensive than pipeline gas, and the revival of coal-fired electricity generation; it is discrediting itself as a responsible international player in the energy and climate fields and compromising the relevant objectives proclaimed by the EU authorities; it is subjecting the energy security of certain third countries to additional risks and disrupting their decarbonization efforts. The climate goals so zealously advocated by the EU on paper are being blithely sacrificed for the sake of political stances. Today it is about containing Russia, but tomorrow it will be about protecting other interests of the European Union and the West as a whole.

Thank you for your attention.