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RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 2020 ANNUAL SECURITY  
REVIEW CONFERENCE**

23 June 2020

**Opening session**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Most OSCE countries are gradually coping with the problem of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) infection, among other things by dint of co-operation and mutual assistance. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the security situation in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area, which is deteriorating.

No one is surprised any more at the force with which its international legal framework is being dismantled. The United States Government's frustration of the entry into force of the Agreement on Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and its withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and now also from the Treaty on Open Skies, undermine stability, reduce transparency and trust, and take the continent back to the Cold War era. NATO's military potential at Russia's borders is being systematically built up, and defence spending is growing without restraint. The internal Ukrainian conflict is heating up. With the complicity, or even encouragement, of certain Western countries, the authorities in Kyiv are shamelessly sabotaging the implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures, continue to shell Donbas and foment tension near our borders.

The sustainability of models of public and State governance is being tested: waves of social and inter-ethnic protest and unrest have swept across the United States of America and a number of Western European countries. Their implications for our common and indivisible security have yet to be assessed.

New pressing challenges are accumulating on top of the unresolved problems of the past. The OSCE must not lose sight of the priority tasks of countering transnational challenges and threats. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected very many people, but it has not affected terrorism, drug trafficking or organized crime. It is even more vital now to strengthen counter-terrorism co-operation within the OSCE and to develop effective inter-State solutions in this field, rather than to load the agenda with peripheral issues and to impose ambiguous concepts such as "countering violent extremism", which erode the international legal framework for combating terrorism. It is time to establish a dedicated working group and increase the number of Security Committee meetings. We are also in favour of strengthening the OSCE's capacity for combating drug trafficking.

The COVID-19 pandemic has confirmed the need for increased co-operation at the OSCE in combating real threats in the information sphere, rather than fake “hybrid” threats. As international organizations, public administrations and businesses have gone online, cybercrime has increased and the risks of cyberconflict have escalated. The focus should be on implementing the OSCE’s 2013 and 2016 confidence-building measures in the digital environment – but in such a way that they do not harm the security of participating States and are not used to meddle in internal affairs or as a pretext for imposing sanctions.

The OSCE’s possibilities for settling conflicts could be used more effectively. This applies in the first place to the internal Ukrainian conflict. Russia actively promotes direct dialogue between the parties – the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk. Unfortunately, however, the situation is close to being deadlocked.

As a result of the military operation by the Government forces in eastern Ukraine, 3,500 civilians have been killed and around 30,000 injured, hundreds are missing, and hundreds of thousands have become internally displaced persons. We understand that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine is under severe pressure from the host State and its backers. But in the light of the data published by the United Nations, the Mission’s mute silence is inexplicable. A consolidated report on civilian casualties and destruction since 2014 is needed.

It is in everyone’s interest to prevent the breakdown of the positive developments of the recent years in the Transdnestrian settlement. We are ready to contribute to the OSCE’s work to restore the intensive dialogue between the sides, notably in the “5+2” format.

We support the efforts of the OSCE Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions between Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia aimed at developing a sustainable security system in the Trans-Caucasus. An important step towards that goal would be to conclude a document on the non-use of force and to launch a process to demarcate the borders between the three countries.

The work of the OSCE Minsk Group on the Nagorno-Karabakh situation is much needed. As the coronavirus threat diminishes, it is important for the Co-Chairs of the group to resume “live” contacts with the representatives of the authorities in Baku and Yerevan.

In Kosovo, inter-ethnic tensions have not decreased. The authorities in Priština are sabotaging the establishment of the Community of Serb Municipalities, preventing the setting up of a court to deal with the crimes of the Kosovo Liberation Army, and forming their own “armed forces”. The OSCE should maintain its presence in the territory.

The Forum for Security Co-operation continues to play an important role in the politico-military dimension. We hope that Germany, which will assume the Chairmanship of the Forum in August, will be able to rectify the situation after the Ukrainian Chairmanship and redirect the Forum’s work in a constructive direction. It succeeded in doing this in 2016, and the OSCE Structured Dialogue has become an important confidence-building measure.

Distinguished colleagues,

The crisis is both a danger and an opportunity. By exposing the fragility and shortcomings of international co-operation, COVID-19 gives us a chance to unite against a common threat. This opportunity

should be used to avoid a new spiral of entrenched dividing lines. We are in favour of de-escalation and are confirming this in practice.

In the military sphere, Russia has formulated a number of concrete proposals: withdrawal of military exercises from the Russia-NATO line of contact, improvement in mechanisms for preventing dangerous military incidents, and restoration of working contacts in military affairs. The Russian armed forces are not planning any major exercises this year near the borders of NATO member countries. The location of the “Caucasus-2020” strategic command and staff exercise has been moved further inside the country.

We are counting on our partners to react constructively. All members of the OSCE community need strategic foresight and a rejection of the philosophy of domination by force, “cordons sanitaires” and “iron curtains”.

In the same way, there is a need to abandon attempts to falsify history and to exploit it for immediate geopolitical interests far from the ideals for which the Helsinki Final Act and other fundamental OSCE documents were adopted. The lessons learned from the tragedy of the Second World War should unite not divide. On the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory, the Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed this topic in his article in *The National Interest*.

Let me remind you that this Conference was also established at a critical moment in our common history after the tragic events of 11 September 2001. We face a no less global challenge today that requires the political will of all of us to restore trust and move towards a community of equal and indivisible security, which our leaders agreed to at the Astana Summit ten years ago.

I hope that this Conference will mark a modest but real step in that direction.

Thank you for your attention.