



ПОСТОЯННОЕ ПРЕДСТАВИТЕЛЬСТВО
РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ
ПРИ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ПО БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ
И СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВУ В ЕВРОПЕ

THE PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY
AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

**Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks
at the 24th OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting**

Vienna, December 7, 2017

Mr Chairperson-in-Office,

Mr Secretary-General,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Euro-Atlantic area architecture, of which the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act remain the cornerstones, has come under a serious test recently. Building up NATO's potential on the "eastern flank," the policies seeking to recklessly expand the alliance, and deploying US missile defence in Europe significantly undermine the principle of indivisibility of security. We are deeply concerned by gross violations of international law, such as interference in internal affairs, including direct support of coups d'etat, attempts to resolve existing issues by military force, use of illegitimate unilateral coercive measures, including as an instrument of unfair competition in various areas ranging from energy to sport. There are attempts to substitute flat-out dictates and ultimatums for the principles of democracy, market freedom, and fair competition in international affairs.

This has led to increased conflict potential, aggravation of terrorist threats, illegal migration and other transnational risks, especially in regions that greatly affect the security of all our countries. We are particularly concerned by the attempts of those who pursue their reckless policies in the Middle East and North Africa to resort to the most unscrupulous methods to achieve their self-serving goals.

I am referring, in particular, to financial and other support provided by a number of the OSCE members to entities such as White Helmets, which disguise themselves as NGOs and conduct openly provocative activities in Syria, thereby directly contributing to the crimes of extremists. There is enough evidence to back this up.

We are convinced that the OSCE needs to step up its activities - without any double standards - in fighting terrorist ideology in accordance with UNSC Resolution 2354.

It is also imperative to consolidate efforts in fighting the drug threat. We continue to implement the OSCE projects to train drug enforcement agents in Afghanistan, where the production of opium and heroin reached all-time highs despite the longstanding presence of NATO troops in that country. We reiterate our proposal to create a separate anti-drug unit in the Secretariat.

States must behave responsibly in the information space which is being increasingly used for illegal purposes. We urge to focus on developing and implementing specific additional confidence-building measures in the interest of ensuring cybersecurity rather than wasting time on unsubstantiated accusations.

Speaking about the security sphere, we hope for the OSCE's ability to contribute to the reduction of military and political tension. The "structured dialogue" launched a year ago at Germany's initiative is designed to help restore trust. Its usefulness will depend on whether it will be possible to avoid politicising it, which some participants of the discussions have so far been aggressively promoting.

We consider it important to strive not only for indivisibility of security, but indivisibility of socioeconomic development as well. In conjunction with its EAEU partners, Russia advocates a dialogue on harmonising various integration processes in our common space in the interest of forming the Greater Eurasian partnership in the future as proposed by President Vladimir Putin. The OSCE can be instrumental in establishing such a dialogue, including by encouraging contacts between the EU and the EAEU.

The situation with the observance of rights and freedoms in the Euro-Atlantic region is a source of deep concern. The vicious practice of dividing the media into "free" and "propagandistic" is gaining ground. In France journalists of the Sputnik news agency are not allowed to attend new conferences. The US authorities are imposing considerable restrictions on the activities of the Russia Today television channel by designating it a foreign agent. Ukraine and the Baltic countries are deliberately reducing the Russian-language information space. Regrettably, OSCE institutions employ double standards and are often silent when such actions are taken in the Western and Western-backed countries. They criticise them only when Russia is compelled to take reciprocal measures. I would like to remind you that when a collection of candidates for the four main positions in the OSCE Secretariat was coordinated last July, we were told in public that these officials will work without bias. The promises that made it possible to reach a consensus on this collection of positions must be kept.

Freedom of speech was also violated last November when Crimean journalists were not allowed to say the truth about the situation on the peninsula. They were denied visas for a visit to Vienna to attend an ODIHR event where they had already registered, and later were not allowed to show their video to its participants.

The position of national minorities continues to evoke alarm. The problem of stateless persons that is shameful for the EU has not been resolved in Latvia and Estonia. The reaction of Brussels to the Ukrainian Law on Education is utterly vague although it crudely violates Kiev's commitments on linguistic and educational rights. If the Venice Commission that is studying this law takes a conciliatory position, it will do serious damage to its reputation. I would like to draw your attention to the absolutely unacceptable attempts to exempt EU languages from this overtly discriminatory law. We hope that everyone understands that it is shameful to tacitly support these attempts to attack the Russian language that is a native tongue for millions of Ukrainian citizens.

We have repeatedly noted the tacit support of the Ukrainian authorities for the radicals that are capturing and desecrating Russian Orthodox churches. Now Kiev has decided to consolidate by law its "right" to interfere in religious life.

We are alarmed by the EU bans on religious symbols, attempts to prevent parents from raising their children in the spirit of Christian morality, and the consolidation of anti-Islamic attitudes.

We have repeatedly raised the issue about the need to comply with the 2014 instruction of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Basel on adopting, on a par with the declaration on countering anti-Semitism, separate documents on combatting Christianophobia and Islamophobia. Agreements must be fulfilled.

The attempts to rewrite the history of World War II, and to whitewash and even glorify Nazis continue unabated. Latvia has passed a law to equate members of the SS – an organisation condemned by the Nuremberg Tribunal – with those who liberated Europe from

Nazism. Poland's war on memorials dedicated to liberator soldiers is sacrilegious and insulting to the memory of tens of millions of victims of fascism and the feelings of their descendants.

For the sake of Europe's future, the OSCE should strongly condemn this. I would like the participants to take note of the statement issued by eight CIS countries on this subject that was circulated at our meeting.

Promoting conflict resolution remains an important area of the Organisation's activities. We support the OSCE efforts in the Contact Group, as well as the Special Monitoring Mission's activities in Donbass. Both these functions of the OSCE should be aimed at developing a direct dialogue between Kiev, Donetsk and Lugansk as required by the Minsk Package of Measures, to which there is no alternative. However, so far the efforts within the Contact Group and the Normandy format have been artificially hindered by Kiev. A dangerous situation has developed around the Joint Control and Coordination Centre (JCCC). Ukraine, in particular, President Poroshenko, who spearheaded the creation of such a centre in 2014, is now doing everything to create unbearable environment for the Russian officers and making unacceptable requirements on them with an eye towards shutting down the centre. The responsibility for this will, of course, lie with the Ukrainian authorities. We are deeply concerned by the attempts to filibuster substantive consideration of the Russian UN Security Council draft resolution on creating a UN mission to improve the protection of observers of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in strict accordance with their mandate.

In return, ideas are advanced that are tantamount to introducing an occupation administration in Donbass in order to bury the Package of Measures, which was unanimously approved by the UN Security Council, and to resolve the issue by force. By the way, the Kiev authorities, including the incumbent ministers, are talking about it out loud and, at the same time, are doing their best to let go unpunished the crimes committed during the coup and after it.

With regard to Nagorno-Karabakh, Russia, including as co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, will continue to promote the search for mutually acceptable solutions by the parties in accordance with the principles approved more than once by the presidents of Russia, the United States, and France.

With regard to the Transnistrian settlement, we note certain progress in implementing the tactics of small steps by Chisinau and Tiraspol. In order to preserve the positive dynamics, we propose that Chisinau and Tiraspol sign an agreement on guarantees for implementing concluded agreements.

We call upon the OSCE, within the framework of the Geneva discussions on the Transcaucasia, to facilitate approving the document with the commitment to no use of force between Georgia and Abkhazia or South Ossetia. All problems of Transcaucasia should be resolved exclusively by peaceful means.

The Organisation's activity is much needed in the Balkans, where has been an increase in instability, terrorist threats, and transnational crime. To a large extent, this is due to the deterioration of the situation in Kosovo, which should remain in the focus of both the OSCE and the UN Security Council. We caution against ill-considered steps that run counter to UN Security Council Resolution 1244. We advocate a mutually respectful Belgrade-Pristina dialogue without unilateral pressure.

The entire OSCE experience confirms the overdue need for reforms. The issue is about adopting the Charter, the rules of the work of executive bodies, bringing things up to code and ensuring transparency in finances, human resources, extra-budgetary projects and the chronic issues of missions, institutions and rules for NGO participation.

I am convinced that only through joint efforts and relying on the principles of equality and consensus, will we be able to strengthen the Organisation, and to achieve the goal outlined at the Astana summit which is to move towards forming a free, democratic and indivisible security community from Vancouver to Vladivostok. We are willing to contribute to this in every possible way. We are waiting for a concrete response to our proposals and concerns. Our criticism of the current state of affairs is substantive and is aimed at bringing the OSCE back to its original purpose which is to be a forum for seeking compromises and developing generally acceptable solutions, rather than a haven for propaganda war activists, or a pliant tool for imposing unilateral approaches.

In closing, we express our gratitude to the Austrian Chairmanship and wish success to the upcoming Italian Chairmanship.