

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.

FSC.DEL/221/21
9 June 2021

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

**PRESENTATION BY MS. IRINA KOVALCHUK,
DEPUTY DIRECTOR, FIRST DEPARTMENT OF CIS COUNTRIES, MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
979th MEETING OF THE OSCE FORUM FOR
SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

9 June 2021

Subject: Regional security arrangements – the Collective Security Treaty Organization

Mr. Chairperson,
Esteemed colleagues,

We should like to express our gratitude to the Armenian Chairmanship for its initiative to hold today's meeting and the invitation to deliver a presentation on the topic of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Our meeting is a good opportunity for a lively exchange of opinions on the role and contribution of the CSTO, especially at the present time, when global affairs remain tense and States are facing numerous transborder challenges and threats, including the coronavirus pandemic. It is clear that these tasks can be dealt with effectively only if we work together.

We consider the CSTO to be a key tool for ensuring security and stability in the post-Soviet space.

With considerable military and specialist resources at its disposal, which it is planned to enhance further, the CSTO has consistently adhered to the principle enshrined in the Treaty of giving priority to the achievement of the Charter's objectives of strengthening peace and international and regional security and stability, above all through political means.

Another no less important aspect is the realism and pragmatism of the tasks set for the CSTO. The Member States are not engaged in combating imaginary threats – they are not tilting at windmills, as it were – and they are not teaming up against anyone. Joint efforts are focused on ensuring security and reliable protection and creating conditions conducive to the steady socio-economic development of the Member States. These approaches form the basis of the CSTO Collective Security Strategy covering the period up to 2025.

The Russian Chairmanship of the Organization in 2020 took place against the backdrop of a challenging global public health situation and upheavals in a number of its Member States. Nevertheless, the Organization has demonstrated its resilience, effectiveness and ability to function in these circumstances.

The concluding CSTO summit was marked by its substantive content. Benchmarks were established for further development of the CSTO in various fields. An extensive package of documents aimed at developing the system of collective security was adopted, the main ones being the Plan for the Development of Military Co-operation for 2021–2025 and the Anti-Drug Strategy for 2021–2025.

The agreed approaches were reflected in the Declaration of the Collective Security Council and the Statement on the establishment of an equitable and sustainable world order. In line with established practice, these outcome documents have been distributed at the OSCE.

We consider it important that the Organization gives priority to strengthening foreign policy co-ordination, interparliamentary collaboration and co-operation with other international organizations.

On the counter-terrorism front, which CSTO Secretary General Stanislav Zas described in detail, a robust toolkit has indeed been assembled as part of the development of the special operations forces of the CSTO Collective Rapid Reaction Force and the “Channel”, “Illegal Migrant”, “Mercenary” and “PROKSI” special operations.

There is a mechanism for the exchange of information on the activities of international terrorist organizations and for countering them in the information sphere. Co-operation among intelligence services to identify and suppress terrorist organizations’ activities in the CSTO area and neutralize their resource base is being expanded. The issue of foreign terrorist fighters is an ongoing focus for the Organization.

Still on the agenda is the task of strengthening the Tajik-Afghan border, including its mountainous stretches that are difficult to access.

We support the policy of aligning the counter-terrorism capacities of the CSTO, the Anti-Terrorism Centre of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

Each year, the CSTO peacekeeping forces practise co-ordination of operations with a view to eventual participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

The Organization’s crisis response system is being improved. The CSTO Crisis Response Centre demonstrated its effectiveness during the pandemic.

Together with our allies, we have agreed to step up our efforts to raise awareness – both in the CSTO countries and beyond their borders – of the Organization’s activities. This is one of the aims of the Russian initiative to organize “CSTO Days” in the Member States. Such work is particularly relevant in the light of the forthcoming commemorative dates next year – the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Collective Security Treaty and the 20th anniversary of the founding of the CSTO.

We should like to emphasize that the CSTO is not a “closed shop”. The Organization willingly shares its experience and expertise in the field of security.

The CSTO’s capacity to develop external relations has been significantly enhanced with the introduction of observer and partner status.

For us it is a given that the CSTO is able to engage actively with structures dealing with regional security issues, including the OSCE.

Co-operation between the CSTO and the OSCE has by no means exhausted its potential. We believe that it benefits both organizations. Such co-operation seems promising from the point of view of strengthening regional security and stability and combating new threats and challenges.

We advocate further development of contacts between the OSCE and CSTO executive structures. We consider it useful to continue the practice of having CSTO representatives address Ministerial Council and Permanent Council meetings and other OSCE events.

We welcome the agreement on the forthcoming meeting of the OSCE Secretary General, Helga Schmid, with Mr. Zas on 22 June this year during her visit to Moscow, and also on her addressing a meeting of the CSTO Permanent Council.

We are keen to expand co-operation between the CSTO and the OSCE in the fields of countering terrorism and related extremism and combating illicit drug trafficking. The CSTO has considerable experience in these areas.

The situation in Afghanistan could be the focus of separate attention and an exchange of CSTO and OSCE assessments in co-operation with Afghan colleagues, not least within the framework of the Working Group on Afghanistan under the auspices of the CSTO Council of Foreign Ministers.

The “Indestructible Brotherhood” exercise involving CSTO peacekeeping forces is scheduled to take place in Russia (Kazan) in November 2021. We will submit a proposal for the invitation of representatives of the OSCE Secretariat as observers.

As the epidemiological situation stabilizes, we believe it would be useful to return to the idea of organizing the first joint CSTO-OSCE conference on security issues. We believe that the realization of this initiative would contribute to the development of specific ways of de-escalating politico-military tensions, strengthening joint confidence-building measures and ensuring security in the region.

We are keen to further co-ordinate the CSTO’s efforts with the OSCE. We are counting on Tajikistan, which has assumed the CSTO Chairmanship, to maintain at a high level the momentum of the CSTO’s development, along with the focus on intensifying dialogue between the two organizations.

Thank you for your attention.