

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/73/26  
13 February 2026

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
MS. IULIA ZHDANOVA, HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS ON MILITARY  
SECURITY AND ARMS CONTROL, AT THE 1127th PLENARY MEETING OF  
THE OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

11 February 2026

**Agenda item: Security Dialogue  
Subject: Women in the armed forces – challenges and perspectives**

Madam Chairperson,

We note that the French Chairmanship has convened a Security Dialogue on women's participation in the armed forces, which is taking place in line with the 2019 OSCE Ministerial Council declaration on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. In that document, the participating States reaffirmed the importance of the knowledge, skills and experience of both women and men when it comes to promoting peace, stability and security in the OSCE area, including the implementation of the Code of Conduct.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, before moving on to the main part of my statement, I should like to make a couple of remarks.

First, in the concept note for the meeting circulated by the Chairmanship there is a strikingly obvious skew towards a partisan, pro-Ukrainian stance. In particular, the reference to a "war of aggression" immediately conditions the participating States into politicizing the discussion of matters related to women's participation in the armed forces. Going forward, we call upon the Chairmanship to act, in strict compliance with the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE, on behalf of all 57 participating States without exception by eschewing such politicized approaches.

Secondly, when reading the concept note for the meeting, we got the impression that the topicality of today's discussion was dictated exclusively by the Ukrainian crisis. So does this mean that, if there were no such crisis, the issue of promoting equal opportunities for men and women in the armed forces would be less relevant for the participating States? It is regrettable that, in taking up a topic that is inherently neutral and

---

<sup>1</sup> "We reconfirm that the knowledge, skills and experience of both women and men are essential to efforts aimed at furthering peace, security and stability in the OSCE region, including the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and we are committed to ensuring and promoting their equal opportunities and full and meaningful participation in that process." Commemorative Declaration on the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security (MC.DOC/1/19, 6 December 2019).

constructive, you are drawing dividing lines in advance by steering the discussion into a channel that seems to suit only a narrow group of States.

Madam Chairperson,

The Russian Federation approaches the issue of women's participation in the armed forces from the perspective of historical traditions, contemporary national security needs and compliance with the norms of international law.

The history of Russian women's involvement in defending the fatherland goes back centuries. However, a special chapter in that history was written by the heroines of the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945, when hundreds of thousands of women voluntarily joined the ranks together with men, serving as snipers, pilots, anti-aircraft gunners and medics and in other military specializations. For us, their heroic endeavour is an everlasting example of patriotism and professional merit.

In the present-day context, women who have voluntarily enlisted for contractual military service in the Russian armed forces are military personnel and perform military service in line with the requirements of the Federal Act on Military Conscription and Military Service. In the case of female service personnel, the age limit for military service is 45 years.

Our country's leadership has repeatedly emphasized that women make a substantial contribution to the functioning of the armed forces, especially in view of the growing complexity of military threats. In particular, Russian President Vladimir Putin has highlighted that women are successfully serving in the zone of the special military operation, carrying out combat missions with honour and dignity, supporting our fighting men on the front lines, and working in field hospitals and voluntary organizations, thereby strengthening the country's defence capability.

Nowadays, the participation of women in the Russian armed forces is linked to a whole range of factors.

First, we are talking about the realization of equality of opportunities for women and men. The State guarantees the right of citizens, irrespective of their sex, to serve the fatherland. As was noted at an expanded meeting of the Defence Ministry Board back in December 2021, "it is important for us to create all the necessary conditions so that every service member, regardless of sex, can realize their potential."

Secondly, it enhances the effectiveness and quality of armed forces staffing. In current conditions, it is not only physical stamina that counts when it comes to military personnel, but also intelligence, resilience to stress and the ability to multitask. Women in our country possess these qualities to the full.

Thirdly, in a number of areas, such as personnel service, psychological support and medicine, women often demonstrate truly excellent results as they contribute to the common cause. As pointed out by Russian Defence Minister Andrey Belousov, "it is impossible to imagine the modern Russian army without women. They are field medics, signals operators, geospatial imaging officers, snipers, psychologists, operators of uncrewed aerial vehicles ..."

Madam Chairperson,

In response to the question as to how the armed forces can be made more attractive for young women: we are guided by the following premises in our country.

A key factor is the creation of a system for career guidance and awareness-raising. The Russian Defence Ministry is actively involved in federal projects such as “Nurturing of Patriotism in Citizens of the Russian Federation”, under which outreach activities are conducted for young people, including young girls. Of particular importance is the expansion of the list of official military specializations that are open to women: there are currently more than 600 positions on that list.

In our country it is not uncommon for women to fill command roles. Career progression is determined exclusively by professional attributes, assessment results and operational requirements. This is vividly illustrated by the fact that around 300,000 women are serving in our armed forces. There are also women in the upper echelons of the Ministry of Defence, including in deputy ministerial posts. As President Putin has emphasized, “all the citizens of our country, regardless of their sex, have equal rights and opportunities”, and this applies wholly to the military realm. For example, female commissioned officers work most frequently in the medical service branch. Female ensigns and petty officers are most often to be found working as signals and communication system operators and as staff clerks.

All the necessary legal conditions have been established by the State to attract women to the armed forces. A central role is played by educational work aimed at strengthening military comradeship. It is important that professionalism and reliability are what is valued most of all within Russian military units.

Furthermore, the provision of social protection for women performing military service is a priority. Particular attention is paid to their rights and entitlements, especially in the case of those bringing up children.

Madam Chairperson,

In closing, we believe it is important to point out that making progress on the expansion of women’s participation in the armed forces must be based on respect for national conditions, historical traditions and the sovereign right of each State to determine the staffing model for its military.

It strikes us as counterproductive to impose homogeneous standards and quotas that are divorced from reality or to exploit this topic for politicized ends as in creating “enemy” images or flaunting a superiority that is quite imaginary.

We are convinced that it is only through respectful dialogue and by eschewing double standards that we will be able to contribute together to putting into practice the goals and objectives laid down in OSCE Ministerial Council documents.

As for providing information on the contribution of women to the implementation of the provisions of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, the Russian Federation is of the view that the existing information exchange on the Code of Conduct adequately meets the objectives at hand.

Thank you for your attention.