

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/249/26

16 June 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 1139th PLENARY MEETING OF
THE OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

10 June 2026

**Agenda item: Security Dialogue on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of
Security: Impact of armed conflict on women and girls**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are perplexed by the topic put forward by the Georgian Chairmanship for discussion in the format of a Security Dialogue. The Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, adopted at the CSCE Summit in Budapest in 1994, makes no mention whatsoever of specific groups of non-combatants in the context of armed conflict. We categorically object to the dilution of the Code's provisions and attempts to apply them artificially to extraneous issues, including the climate, the situation of women and children, and so on.

Discussion of the topic announced today – the impact of armed conflict on women and girls – essentially falls under the purview of other OSCE bodies and relevant structures of the United Nations. We are obliged to note that, at present, “women’s” and “children’s” issues have become the subject of manipulation on many international platforms. Unfortunately, our Forum is no exception.

This has been confirmed once again by today’s statements by the delegations of the European Union, Germany, Sweden, Ukraine and others. When emotions run high, there is a near-total absence of evidence and basic critical thinking. In the finest traditions of the “post-truth era”, rather than verifying facts, false claims are bandied about and accepted as gospel.

It goes without saying that, with such an approach, a false sense of impunity encourages further crimes against women and children. Behind all the empty talk that serves merely as a distraction, not only are the interests of women and children being sacrificed to a distorted political reality, but their very lives as well. War, they say, will justify everything.

If a large number of children have indeed gone missing in Ukraine, then this is a monstrous crime, the investigation of which requires the concerted efforts of the entire international community. For our part, should we receive a request to that effect, we would be prepared to provide every possible assistance through the relevant agencies to locate and rescue them.

Russia has nothing to do with the abduction of Ukrainian children. To avoid any further misunderstandings, we urge the delegations to read the detailed report published by the Office of the Russian Federation Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights on 7 May this year. It provides exhaustive information regarding the number of children rescued in 2022 from brutal shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces, their subsequent fates, and the legal legitimacy of the actions taken in this regard. As for the justification for the evacuation measures, as we see it, the terrorist attack in Starobelsk is a stark illustration of what lies in store for women and children who find themselves within the range of Ukrainian artillery during a period of escalation.

I repeat, the groundless accusations levelled against the Russian Federation serve no other purpose than to cover up for the real criminals, obstruct the rescue of minors and prevent the perpetrators from being punished.

Mr. Chairperson,

To bring some balance to the discussion, allow me to share some observations regarding the impact of armed conflict on women and children using the events that unfolded between 2014 and 2022 in what was then the south-eastern part of Ukraine as an example.

The resilient and strong-willed women of Donbass became role models of good leadership and a moral compass for many Russian women and girls.

The socio-economic conditions, as well as the security situation, in which the women and children of Donbass found themselves during that period is appalling. Twelve years ago, in late April 2014, the Kyiv regime – which had come to power through unconstitutional means – launched a so-called anti-terrorist operation against the civilian population of what were then the Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine, in violation of the country's Constitution, using the army, the intelligence services and hastily formed armed groups of a nationalist and openly neo-Banderite persuasion (others refused to fire upon their own people). All residents of the two Ukrainian regions without exception – men, women and children, including babies in their cradles – were publicly labelled as terrorists.

Consistent, deliberate steps were taken to create intolerable living conditions for the civilian population of Donbass.

From late May to early June 2014, the Ukrainian Government froze the treasury accounts of budgetary institutions and shut down banks located in these territories. People were effectively left without any means of subsistence – no savings, pensions or social benefits.

In the weeks that followed, 1.5 million residents of Lugansk were subjected to a full-scale blockade: food supplies ceased, and the Ukrainian armed forces and nationalist formations cut off the gas and electricity supplies to Lugansk and its suburbs. Right Sector fighters blew up the water pumping station that supplied water to most of the city, and a sniper opened fire on the emergency crews sent to restore the water supply.

It was not only through hunger and thirst that attempts were made to force Donbass into submission. Both artillery and military aircraft were used against Ukraine's own population.

In all this time, children have shared the hardships with the adults. On the official Telegram channel of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), following a visit by its staff to Starobelsk, the

message of condolences to the families of those killed is accompanied by the following words: “The ICRC has been present in Lugansk since 2014, and we see how the devastating consequences of more than a decade of armed conflict are affecting people’s lives”. There are numerous publicly available reports from the ICRC indicating which vital civilian infrastructure facilities are being restored. As you can imagine, these facilities did not fall into disrepair on their own.

As for the children of Donbass, a simple calculation tells us that an entire generation has grown up under Ukrainian shelling – a generation that has either never known peacetime or that has no memory of it due to their young age.

Today we are presenting drawings by young artists from Gorlovka, Makeyevka, Rubezhnoye and Severodonetsk – cities that have been situated along the line of engagement for many years. We are not doing this to tug at your heartstrings. This is tangible proof that children lived in Donbass in 2014 and continue to live there today. The collective actions, or rather, at a certain point, the inaction and “selective blindness” of those present led to their world becoming just as it is depicted in these pictures.

Under the extremely difficult circumstances I have just described, the mothers of these children were unbowed. The women of Donetsk and Lugansk have made a tremendous contribution to sustaining life in the region. They have headed or served on key local government bodies, they were actively involved in the Minsk-based negotiation format, and their names are well known here at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Natalya Yurevna Nikonorova actively participated in the work of that format at the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) level for many years. It is impossible to overstate the contribution made by Darya Vasilievna Morozova and Olga Anatolyevna Kobtseva to the efforts of the TCG Working Group on Humanitarian Issues; thanks to them, many detained persons have been reunited with their families on both sides of the line of contact.

Incidentally, because of their active involvement in social and humanitarian work, women and girls from Donbass consistently appeared – and continue to appear – on the “hit lists” published on the notorious Ukrainian Myrotvorets website, which contains personal information, home and work addresses, as well as calls for the “elimination” of these individuals. By the way, the number of Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian children whose personal data has also been published on this website has exceeded 300. Among them, for example, are a six-year-old girl and a four-year-old boy whose families went on holiday to Crimea. These young children are accused of attempting to undermine Ukraine’s sovereignty.

Mr. Chairperson,

The women of Donbass were forced to take on even the most emotionally gruelling responsibilities. For example, Anna Borisovna Soroka headed an inter-agency working group tasked with locating and identifying the graves of victims of Ukrainian aggression. Thanks to their efforts, information concerning hundreds of civilians killed by the Ukrainian armed forces – civilians who would otherwise have been considered missing – has been documented and preserved.

Among the women who volunteered to defend the rights of minors, regional children’s ombudspersons were appointed to uphold children’s rights in conflict situations. Unfortunately, in some cases, the only thing that can be done for the child is to ensure that their killers are brought to justice.

Here are just a couple of examples from the first few months of the Ukrainian punitive operation against the civilian population of Donbass.

On 2 July 2014, a five-year-old boy named Ivan – who had gone outside to watch a plane fly overhead – and 11 other civilians were killed in an air strike on the village of Kondrashovka in the Stanitsa Luganskaya district. In July and August 2014 alone, 19 minors from Lugansk were killed by Ukrainian death squads.

On 27 July 2014, in the Donetsk People's Republic, the “Madonna of Gorlovka” – 23-year-old Kristina Zhuk – was killed alongside her ten-month-old daughter, Kira, during the shelling of Gorlovka by Kyiv-backed armed formations. This date marks the Day of Remembrance of the Child Victims of the War in Donbass.

On 31 October 2014, in the town of Kirovsk in the Lugansk People's Republic, a five-year-old boy named Vanya and his father were blown to pieces when a munition that had landed in the courtyard of their home detonated, in full view of his mother and sister.

And so it goes on.

If the Kyiv regime's criminal actions had received a proper assessment by the international community back then, we would be discussing entirely different matters today.

We have named just a few outstanding women. In reality, there are hundreds of them. The women of Donetsk and Lugansk continue to this day to fight for justice for their compatriots, for the safety of their children and for the prosperity of their homeland. I am confident that we will all come to appreciate the contribution made by the women of Donbass to the establishment of a new and more just security architecture on the continent. Today we stand shoulder to shoulder with them.

Thank you for your attention.