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**STATEMENT BY
MR. OLEG BUSHUEV, DEPUTY HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS ON MILITARY
SECURITY AND ARMS CONTROL, AT THE 96th JOINT MEETING OF THE
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION AND THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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**Agenda item: General statements
Subject: Russia's military transparency and NATO countries'
provocative military activities**

Distinguished Co-Chairpersons,

As you know, the Russian-Belarusian combined, joint strategic exercise "Zapad-2025" took place from 12 to 16 September. Even in the current context of rabid Russophobia, our States took the greatest possible measures to ensure transparency both at the stage of preparing for the exercise and when conducting it.

Thus, the area for the stage of the exercise that was to be conducted on the territory of Belarus – a State that directly borders Alliance countries – was in good time moved deep inside the country. Our Belarusian friends sent invitations to all the OSCE participating States to observe this military activity. A detailed briefing on the forthcoming phase was organized for foreign experts. The Belarusian stage of the exercise was observed by a representative of the Conflict Prevention Centre and diplomatic and military officials from 23 countries, including Hungary, Türkiye and the United States of America. However, an overwhelming majority of NATO and EU member States simply ignored the invitation to take part in observing the Belarusian phase of the exercise. Well, that was their choice – as the saying goes, you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink.

The manoeuvres were a success, as was noted by the political and military leadership of our two States. Information on the outcomes of the exercise can generally be consulted on the websites of the Belarusian and Russian Defence Ministries.

In view of all this, there is a ring of absurdity to the pronouncements by some senior EU officials about the "lack" of requisite transparency on the part of our countries in connection with the conduct of the exercise.

Thus, on 15 September, Anitta Hipper, an official spokesperson for foreign affairs representing the European Commission, called upon Russia and Belarus to “fully comply” with the Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs), which requires prior notification of military activities. On 17 September, she was officially seconded by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Kaja Kallas.

Over many a decade, the Russian Federation fulfilled in good faith its politico-military obligations and commitments not only under the Vienna Document 2011, but also pursuant to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, where the scope and level of detail [of the information to be provided] were even greater. Later on, when the deterioration of the system of arms control and confidence-building measures had already gained visible contours as a result of the stance of several Western countries, we continued to provide this information for some time yet. However, the NATO and EU countries and their client States actively charted a destructive course; they stopped implementing their CSBM-related commitments. Our delegation has already cited some examples of such violations. Nevertheless, I shall remind you of them once more.

Estonia, France, Germany and the Netherlands are openly stating that they have no intention of sending invitations to Russia under Chapter IV of the Vienna Document 2011. Czechia, Poland and Ukraine systematically submit a number of information exchange documents with a note to the effect that they are not to be shared with all participating States.

In these circumstances, we have been obliged to take relevant countermeasures, including in relation to the Vienna Document. To expect any other approach from Russia would be naive, to say the least.

As for the “Zapad-2025” exercise, we should like to point out that the NATO Allied Command is conducting, near our borders and all at once, several exercises with a single underlying operational concept whose combined scale is almost ten times greater than that of the Russian-Belarusian manoeuvres, including “Quadriga 2025” (on the territory of Finland, Germany and Lithuania and in the Baltic Sea), “Iron Defender 2025” (Poland) and “Namejs 2025” (Lithuania). Their overall goal is to rehearse in practice various scenarios for the use of a NATO joint force grouping against the Russian armed forces. All in all, some 60,000 military personnel from 18 Alliance countries and also from Australia have been involved in these manoeuvres. As part of the “Quadriga 2025” exercise, the movement of Bundeswehr units from their permanent bases to Lithuanian territory was simulated in practice.

We note that around 30,000 military personnel took part in the “Iron Defender 2025” exercise organized by Poland – that figure was cited by Polish Deputy Defence Minister Cezary Tomczyk in an interview with the Polsat News agency. Incidentally, the information provided by Poland at the OSCE on the number of troops involved was rather different: around 8,000 was the figure given there.

Building up the myth of the alleged inevitability of an attack by Russia on countries belonging to the bloc, the NATO leadership is using the “Russian threat” as a pretext for maintaining a high intensity of command and combat training for the NATO forces in Eastern Europe.

Fifty or so major exercises are conducted near our borders every year, with a total of more than 300,000 military personnel from the bloc involved in these.

Especially provocative are the manoeuvres in which the massive concentration of forces and equipment near the western borders of Russia and Belarus is rehearsed. The most significant of these is the “Steadfast Defender” series of exercises for NATO forces, which are conducted once every three years (the next one being scheduled for 2027).

Thus, the scenario of “Steadfast Defender 2024” envisaged the Alliance conducting combat operations against Russia simultaneously on several strategic axes from the Arctic to the Black Sea. Around 100,000 military personnel from the Alliance countries were involved in the exercise, along with at least 15,000 combat and special-purpose vehicles, more than 300 airplanes and helicopters, and over 70 ships. The concept and scale of that exercise were comparable to those of the Alliance’s “Autumn Forge” exercises, which were conducted in the Cold War era as part of final-stage training to test the bloc’s readiness for an armed conflict with the USSR in Europe and the Atlantic.

This year, the largest such activity was the series of three exercises conducted under the overall code name “DEFENDER-Europe”. Its objective was to rehearse plans for the use of NATO coalition forces against the Russian armed forces on the eastern flank. For the implementation of combat training missions, the exercise brought together the staffs and military formations of the armed forces of 31 member States of the Alliance, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Moldova, and also the “Kosovo Security Forces”. The overall numbers involved were 30,000 military personnel, at least 5,000 combat and special-purpose vehicles and around 100 airplanes and helicopters.

At the same time as “DEFENDER-Europe”, a further ten exercises sharing the same concept as those manoeuvres were conducted with the armed forces of NATO countries and partners, including “Formidable Shield” (to validate the combat potential of the bloc’s air defence system) and “Steadfast Deterrence” (to evaluate the preparedness of coalition command and control organizations for the conduct of a multi-domain operation). Overall, between May and June of this year, up to 100,000 military personnel from the NATO forces were simultaneously involved in carrying out training missions aimed at preparation for a possible armed conflict with Russia.

In addition, with a view to turning Baltic waters into an “inland sea of NATO”, the Alliance conducted the “BALTOPS 2025” exercise in June, which involved rehearsing various scenarios for the use of a joint force grouping, with the maritime component paramount, to block sea traffic in the Baltic. Something that stood out was the large-scale use of robotic systems and unmanned aerial vehicles.

We are seeing a heightened level of combat training activities conducted in the Arctic by NATO forces. In July and August, an aircraft carrier multipurpose group from the US Navy led by the carrier *Gerald R. Ford* was in the Norwegian Sea and the Barents Sea to test the preparedness of the US air defence system’s maritime component in terms of intercepting Russian missiles at high latitudes. On 3 September, a joint training event involving the carrier strike group and a B-2A Spirit strategic bomber was conducted in the Norwegian Sea.

We are keeping a close eye on the exercises conducted as part of the profoundly destabilizing practice of NATO “joint nuclear missions”. A glaring example is the “Steadfast Noon” exercise conducted every autumn, during which the launching of nuclear strikes against Russian facilities is rehearsed. Aviation units of the bloc’s non-nuclear-weapon States are also extensively involved in the various exercise missions. In addition, the geographical scope of the US nuclear presence in Europe is being widened, as is the circle of Alliance countries to which the task of delivering US nuclear weapons to their targets on the territory of Russia and its allies can be delegated.

We are compelled to note that the Alliance’s combat training activities on the eastern flank are of a decidedly anti-Russian nature. Unfortunately, we are not seeing our opponents moving closer to an adequate assessment of reality.

We have this to say to all those who are ill disposed towards us: your security cannot and will not be safeguarded at the expense of the security of other countries. Unless the interests of Russia and its allies are taken into consideration, there is no way that a functioning security architecture in Europe can be built. The sooner our opponents grasp this, the better – not least for them, too.

Thank you for your attention.