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TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS ON MILITARY SECURITY AND
ARMS CONTROL, AT THE 988th PLENARY MEETING OF THE
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

13 October 2021

**Agenda item: Security Dialogue
Subject: Military-to-military contacts on doctrines**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful to the Austrian Chairmanship for placing on the agenda of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) this extremely important topic regarding the development of contacts between military representatives of the OSCE participating States on the issue of military doctrines.

Negotiating practice over the years has shown that the role of direct contacts between the military departments of different countries cannot be overemphasized. They contribute to addressing a wide range of non-military security challenges, reducing mistrust and suspicion and, as a result, stabilizing the politico-military situation.

Military-to-military contacts, especially when they are not burdened by political differences, are a much more productive way of reaching concrete agreements. Examples include the negotiation of the US-Russian Memorandum on the Prevention of Incidents and Ensuring Air Safety in Syria, and co-operation under the bilateral agreements on the prevention of incidents on and over the high seas (INCSEA).

We agree with the Austrian Chairmanship's assessment that solving the problems of military confrontation requires not a reduction but an increase in the intensity of interaction between military specialists. We believe that such channels of communication should be "all-weather" ones. On the other hand, not all OSCE participating States are genuinely interested in this.

We remember well how the principle of maintaining stable military contacts within the NATO-Russia Council was sacrificed for the sake of political expediency. The decision to freeze military interaction with the Alliance was not taken in Moscow. However, we would like to caution that we need the same degree of military co-operation as the NATO countries. This is a two-way street.

We keep hearing NATO colleagues talking about the need for dialogue and for a resumption of meetings of the NATO-Russia Council. We view this as a clear example of hypocrisy. Judge for yourself: on

the one hand, we are told about the importance of interaction; on the other hand, our Permanent Mission to NATO is being reduced in size and there is gross misinformation about Russia. As a consequence, there will soon be no one left in Brussels who can have a proper conversation with the Alliance's International Secretariat and member countries. Apparently, this is what the NATO members are trying to achieve.

Of course, Western colleagues are aware that the cessation of military contacts, not to mention the abandonment of mutually beneficial defence projects, affects the security of all countries and creates a climate of uncertainty and suspicion that can lead to conflict situations.

The international security environment is deteriorating amid intensifying inter-State rivalry and the breakdown of effective arms control mechanisms. The United States of America continues its efforts to deploy a global missile defence system capability. With the collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty provoked by the United States, there is a risk that US intermediate- and shorter-range ground-based missiles will be deployed in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. We regard US plans to place weapons in outer space as potentially dangerous.

Despite assurances that measures on NATO's eastern flank are supposedly "reactive" and "proportionate", the scale of these preparations clearly exceeds defence needs. Under the pretext of imaginary threats, Alliance members are stepping up military activity near our borders, in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. There has been an increase in the equipment and combat readiness of US and Allied Forward Presence units in Poland and the Baltic countries, and in Romania and Bulgaria.

In these circumstances, the Russian Federation's actions to improve its defence capabilities are reactive and commensurate with the evolving security situation. The military policy of our country is aimed at deterring and preventing military conflicts and ensuring the defence and security of the State and its allies. We should like to emphasize in particular that the major Russian doctrinal documents adopted in 2020 and 2021 still do not contain provisions defining any States as likely enemies.

Russia pursues a course aimed at building constructive dialogue with foreign States in the interests of ensuring global and regional security. We are ready to develop military co-operation with our neighbours and partners, including joint operational and combat training, to address common challenges in countering terrorist threats. There has been positive experience in this area.

As a first step, we call on our European partners, especially the members of NATO, to adopt a political decision to resume military-to-military dialogue. I would recall that the Russian defence establishment has repeatedly confirmed its readiness to work together. Back in July 2016, a proactive agenda was proposed to the Alliance to restore co-operation. Russia's initiative to de-escalate tensions in Europe also remains on the negotiating table.

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to say a few words about the OSCE High-Level Military Doctrine Seminar held in February. We are forced to recognize that the deterioration of the overall security situation in Europe has inevitably also affected this mechanism for interaction, where the search for greater mutual understanding between the military leadership of OSCE participating States has given way to confrontational anti-Russian rhetoric. In view of this situation and the sanctions policy of the West, for the first time ever representatives of the Russian Ministry of Defence did not attend this event. If our partners do not change their attitude, we cannot exclude the possibility that this practice will continue in the future.

In the current situation, is military-to-military dialogue in the OSCE possible at all? Yes, it should be possible, but under a number of fundamental conditions. The main one is a return to co-operation on an egalitarian basis in building an inclusive European architecture of equal and indivisible security. Dialogue that aims to put pressure on Russia, especially through its “containment” (or even “intimidation”) by force, is a road to nowhere.

The experience of the past decade shows that there is no alternative to the collective strengthening of security. There is a need to look for ways to de-escalate and to think about how we can work together and achieve practical military interaction on a mutually respectful basis as equals. Whether the Austrian initiative to hold regular intersessional dialogue on military doctrines can contribute to realizing these goals depends on the political will of all OSCE participating States without exception.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I request that our statement be attached to the FSC journal of the day.