

Remarks by Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko at the opening of the annual OSCE Conference on security issues, Vienna, June 26, 2018

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Mr Chairman,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Please allow me to express my gratitude to the Italian Chairmanship, the Secretary General and the Secretariat for the excellent organisation of the conference. We hope it will allow us discuss and find ways to resolve problems that are obstructing the building of an indivisible security system in the OSCE.

The current situation in Europe and the world is very turbulent. As President of Russia Vladimir Putin put it, a game without rules has become the rule. Thirty years after the end of the Cold War the world has become economically and politically multipolar. A dangerous uncertainty in relations between states and their associations is growing. International law is being subjected to trials. Regional conflicts continue to flare up. States have to counter transnational threats many of which are due to Western intervention. Giant territories on the periphery of the OSCE do not have any statehood and have turned into territories that are controlled by various terrorist groups. All of this requires a consolidated effort on a truly collective basis. Attempts to form "security islands" around NATO or the EU will not work under the current conditions.

Russia has offered many times to agree on the rules in this respect, and to counter common threats. Ten years ago we suggested the idea of a treaty on European security but the proposal was ignored. When we began to rebuild our position, the West resorted to the tried-and-tested practice of interference in internal affairs, sanctions and military deterrence instead of an equitable dialogue.

Incidentally, the coup in Kiev that led to Crimea's self-determination and a civil war in Donbass are indicative. It is surprising how quickly and easily NATO returned to its initial "raison d'être," that was succinctly formulated by its first Secretary General Lord Ismay: to keep Russians out, Americans in. I will not mention the third element of this formula.

Today NATO and the EU have made the architecture of security hostage to the crisis in Ukraine – one of many conflicts in Europe. But sanctions and pressure will not settle conflicts or enhance security. Let me recall that after the NATO bombings of Yugoslavia, which changed the very paradigm of European security, the European countries still managed to start working for common interests. The Charter for European Security and the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe demonstrated a political will for cooperation.

Today, the NATO countries must answer this question for themselves: do they think security should be divided – in confrontation with Russia, or united – in cooperation to counter common threats? Regrettably, for the time being multilateral formats are being used not to restore trust but to exert pressure on Russia, in part, by limiting dialogue. These days only few people do not talk about the need for de-escalation and prevention of dangerous military incidents or the wrong interpretation of the intentions of the sides. Nobody argues this. But how do we achieve this if military contacts are completely frozen and other channels of political and public communication are ruptured? The answer to this question is obvious. Consistent cooperation in areas of common interest has been suspended and one more resource for enhancing trust and security has been closed.

Unilateral sanctions, demonisation and imposition of the image of an enemy are aggravating the confrontation. Some political forces are trying to use Russophobia as the main driver of European and Euro-Atlantic unity that is falling apart for objective reasons. The narrative about Russia that has been imposed on public consciousness by an unprecedented propaganda campaign has nothing to do with reality in this country, its efforts in the international arena or the aspirations of the Russian people. Specific political steps are being justified by ill-disguised excuses like "highly likely" or the absence of other plausible explanations. There is no end to this. Now attempts are being made to assign "attributive functions" to the OPCW Secretariat in violation of the fundamental principle of all regimes of non-proliferation and arms control – the sovereign and exclusive right of states to assess the fulfillment of commitments. This is a direct road to a crisis and conflict in The Hague Organisation and the undermining of UN Security Council prerogatives. No less dangerous is the trend to look at the regions of the world through the prism of geopolitical competition and a "zero sum game." This fully applies to the Western Balkans.

Unless we stop these dangerous trends, confrontation can become irreversible. Especially so, when it underlies not only politics, but military planning as well. The myth about the so-called Russian military threat has been inflated to absurd proportions. In this regard, you may be aware that Russia's defence budget in 2018 was about \$46 billion and will be reduced in the future, whereas in NATO countries it amounts to an aggregate sum of \$1 trillion, which is more than half the total military spending of all the countries in the world. In the United States, it exceeds \$700 billion, and its European allies will soon have it at \$300 billion. If they comply with the NATO-established 2-percent rule, the European allies' total defence spending will reach \$400 billion, with 20%, or about \$100 billion a year, set aside for arms purchases. This begs the question: for what purpose? What enemy or enemies are they going to fight? The US operates about 800 military bases worldwide and is implementing a global missile defence system project with components deployed in Poland and Romania. The Alliance continues to establish its presence in Eastern Europe and to speed up the implementation of the "open door" policy, which only creates new dividing lines and exacerbates instability. Of course, in its defence planning, Russia has to take account of these factors.

Mr Chairperson, we support any and all attempts to return to a normal depoliticised conversation about security issues, including as part of the OSCE "structured dialogue." It is imperative to restore cooperation to cover the entire range of new threats and challenges. Europe and North America were swept by a wave of terrorist attacks in 2016-2018. We will not forget the tragedy in Nice, London, Berlin and Brussels. More and more acts of terror are committed by persons who have returned from conflict zones or loners subdued by terrorist propaganda. This suggests that fighting the ideology of terror and foreign terrorist militants is coming to the fore, including in the OSCE.

Drug trafficking is closely tied in with terrorism, as its proceeds are used to finance terrorist attacks. The area of land used to grow drug crops in Afghanistan - an OSCE partner - is expanding. In 2017, it reached a record high of 300,000 hectares. Synthetic and psychotropic substances distributed through the internet represent a threat to the citizens of our countries. The OSCE should not turn a blind eye to these problems. We are in favour of boosting its capacity on the anti-drug track and are making our contribution by implementing the OSCE project to train specialists from Afghanistan and Serbia.

Migration represents a major common challenge. It is being felt most acutely in Western Europe in connection with the influx of migrants from the southern Mediterranean. We are convinced that the OSCE can contribute to global efforts to address migration problems, of course, without duplicating them.

Colleagues,

OSCE resources remain an important factor in conflict resolution. I have already mentioned the civil war in eastern Ukraine. More than 10,000 people died there in four years, including 2,500 civilians. The situation is worsening. Kiev is blocking the Minsk agreements which are the only basis for the settlement. The Ukrainian laws on reintegrating Donbass and education and launching the Joint Forces Operation led to an armed escalation and more victims. We hope that the OSCE's efforts in the Contact Group and the Special Monitoring Mission's onsite activities will contribute to implementing the Minsk Agreements and facilitate a settlement to the internal conflict.

The situation in Kosovo, where ethnic tensions continue unabated, is a source of concern to us. Pristina is sabotaging the creation of the Community of Serbian Municipalities, preventing the beginning of court proceedings on the Kosovo Liberation Army's crimes, and forming its own "armed forces." The OSCE must maintain its presence in that region.

We are glad that progress has been made in the Transnistrian settlement process in December 2017 with the participation of the OSCE. We note the positive results of the first in 2018 5 + 2 meeting in Rome and the efforts of Special Representative of the Italian Chairmanship Franco Frattini. Now, it is important to make sure that the parties honour the agreements that have been reached. Unfortunately, the adoption on June 22 of the UNGA draft resolution initiated by Moldova represents a step back in this regard.

The work of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs to advance the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement process remains an important part of OSCE activities.

The OSCE co-chairmanship in the Geneva discussions between Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which is aimed at developing stable security guarantees in the Caucasus, deserves high praise.

It is important to make full use of the OSCE Platform for Co-operative Security to establish a dialogue between all organisations operating within the Organisation's space. By the way, this initiative was put forward by the EU in 1999. It is important to continue to seek the harmonisation of integration processes in our common interests, and the OSCE can play an important role here.

I agree with the position of the Italian chairmanship that it is time to take a comprehensive look at the OSCE's outreach and its mechanisms. The effect of extra-regional factors on security in the OSCE zone will continue to increase.

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In closing, I would like to re-emphasise the importance of restoring confidence and moving towards a community based on equal and indivisible security, which our leaders agreed upon during the 2010 Astana summit. This, in turn, will aid the resolution of conflicts and the fight against common threats. I hope that today's Conference and the upcoming OSCE Ministerial Council in Milan will help us achieve that goal.

Thank you.