



**United States Mission to the OSCE**  
**U.S. Statement for the**  
**Forum for Security Cooperation:**  
**General Statements**

As delivered by Arms Control Counselor Daniel Wartko  
February 22, 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to our guests today. We're glad to have you here with us.

On February 23, 2022, our Russian colleagues came into this room and lied to all of us as they denied Russia's plans for a massive military escalation against Ukraine. That day, our Russian colleague said, and I quote, "The idea of there being plans for a 'Russian invasion' of Ukraine was hatched inside the U.S. Department of State, and that is where it also died on 16 February." End quote. Less than 24 hours – I repeat – less than 24 hours after he spoke those words – those blatant lies – an insult to this institution for which he has still not apologized or even acknowledged, Russia's tanks, which were pre-positioned across the border in Russia and Belarus for an assault, began their brutal invasion of Ukrainian territory. Now, I understand why our Russian colleague could not be here in the room with us this morning. I, too, would be ashamed to face all of you if I had lied to you as he has.

At that same meeting here, the Russian delegate claimed, quote, "The Russian delegation's message is quite clear, namely that international law prohibits the organization, advocacy, financing, incitement or toleration of activities aimed at destroying the constitutional order of another State." End quote. Of course, he was aiming that accusation at Ukraine, but in light of what followed, the irony and shamelessness of this statement is staggering. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine is clearly aimed at doing exactly what our Russian colleague condemned: namely, the destruction of the constitutional order of another State. And even more, it was aimed at destroying Ukraine as a sovereign state entirely.

Despite Vladimir Putin's rhetorical dismissal of Ukraine's history and its very statehood, Russia does in fact recognize Ukraine as a State. Through its commitments in the Budapest Memorandum, through the 1997 Treaty on friendship, cooperation, and partnership, and through numerous other agreements, Russia has in fact acknowledged, repeatedly, that Ukraine is a sovereign State, a sovereign State that Russia has illegally and deliberately attacked without

provocation. And as to any supposed threats to Russia itself: Frankly, the greatest threat to the constitutional order of Russia, to the lives of its citizens, to its economy, and to its international reputation lies in the Kremlin – those using Putin’s war to dismantle any remaining vestiges of democracy, respect for human rights, and rule of law in their own country while waging a brutal and illegal war against a peaceful neighbor.

Mr. Chair,

This Friday, February 24, 2023, marks one year since Russia, with Belarus’s collusion, began its full-scale war of choice against the sovereign state of Ukraine. It is a somber moment, a day of remembrance for all those tens of thousands of innocent Ukrainian civilians, soldiers, fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters, who have lost their lives or been displaced by this senseless war. There will be a reckoning, and those who aided Vladimir Putin in carrying out his war of aggression against Ukraine will be held to account. Justice can take time, but justice will prevail.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.