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United States Mission to the OSCE
U.S. Statement for the
Forum for Security Cooperation:
General Statements –
Russia’s War of Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Chief Arms Control Delegate Daniel Wartko
June 7, 2023

Thank you, Madam Chair,

UN Security Council Resolution 1540 on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, adopted unanimously in 2004 and re-affirmed unanimously last year in UNSCR 2663, is a topic that we have not discussed at the FSC for some time. However, in the context of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, there are some aspects of it that deserve discussion today. The preamble of UNSCR 1540 reaffirmed a 1992 Security Council Statement, which was approved at the head-of-state-level, that said, quote, “All disputes between States should be peacefully resolved in accordance with the provisions of the [UN] Charter” and that states, quote, “reaffirmed their commitment to the collective security system of the Charter to deal with threats to peace and to reverse acts of aggression.”

The 1992 Statement also goes on to say, quote, “The members of the Council underline the need for all Member States to fulfill their obligations in relation to arms control and disarmament; to prevent the proliferation in all its aspects of all weapons of mass destruction; to avoid excessive and destabilizing accumulations and transfers of arms; and to resolve peacefully in accordance with the Charter any problems concerning these matters threatening or disrupting the maintenance of regional and global stability. They emphasize the importance of the early ratification and implementation by the States concerned of all international and regional arms control arrangements, especially the START and CFE Treaties.” This was the first-ever UN Security Council Statement made at the head of state level, and the Russian Federation’s president was among those heads of state who adopted this statement, which was later incorporated into UNSCR 1540.

So, with that as preamble, let us reflect on those words and where we are just over 30 years on from that Statement and almost 20 years on from UNSCR

1540. Russia has ignored its obligation to settle its international disputes by peaceful means. Instead, Russia has brutally invaded Georgia and Ukraine, and continues to occupy lands in both countries. These violations of territorial integrity threaten to undermine the ability of both countries to fulfill some of their UNSCR 1540 obligations and are all the more egregious considering Russia's role as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and thus of the 1540 Committee. Let us also remember that Russia's attacks on Ukraine are in complete disregard not only of its international obligations under the UN Charter but also the commitments Russia made specifically to Ukraine under the Budapest Memorandum of 1994. Russia made those commitments in the context of Ukraine giving up its nuclear weapons and acceding to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a Non-Nuclear Weapon State. By signing the Budapest Memorandum, Russia reaffirmed its commitment to respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and "existing borders" and reaffirmed its obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against Ukraine.

So again, consider where Russia has brought us today: Over the last month, Russia has launched aerial bombardments on Kyiv's civilian population in a strategy of terror. As Russia irresponsibly imports Buzz Bombs and artillery shells from pariah states and funnels weapons to non-state actors within Ukraine's internationally recognized borders, it now also claims to be preparing to station nuclear weapons in Belarus along with their associated delivery systems. While Russia asserts that it will retain full custody and control over the nuclear weapons it intends to station in Belarus, the leader of the Belarusian regime, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, gleefully announced last week that, quote, "There will be nuclear weapons for everyone," who joins the Union State of Belarus and Russia. Such language raises serious questions about the commitment of Belarus and Russia to upholding their respective obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

So much for Russia's commitment to international and regional arms control arrangements. So much for Russia's commitment to New START, which Russia has invalidly purported to suspend its participation without a valid legal basis. So much for Russia's commitment to CFE, from which it is about to formally withdraw but only after flagrantly violating CFE both before and after its purported "suspension" of participation 16 years ago – again without a valid legal basis.

Madam Chair,

In the face of Russia's aggression and in response to its war crimes against Ukraine and its people, the United States and our friends, partners, and Allies reaffirm our commitment to the collective security system of the UN Charter to deal with threats to peace and to reverse acts of aggression. We reaffirm our right under OSCE's Principles Governing Conventional Arms Transfers to transfer arms to Ukraine to enable it to exercise its inherent right of self-defense as reflected in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. And, as is stated in the very first line of UNSCR 1540, we affirm that "the proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as their means of delivery, constitutes a threat to international peace and security."

Thank you, Madam Chair.