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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. KONSTANTIN GAVRILOV, HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS ON MILITARY
SECURITY AND ARMS CONTROL, AT THE 1034th PLENARY MEETING
OF THE OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

1 February 2023

Agenda item: Any other business

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to raise an issue that is not specific to the agenda of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), namely the good faith of the Republic of Austria in fulfilling its duties as host State for the headquarters of international organizations, including the OSCE. I refer in particular to the non-issuance of visas to members of the Russian delegation, be it diplomatic visas for permanent staff or short-term visas for staff on a rotating basis.

We have been waiting for months for the host State to abandon the practice of long delays and sometimes simply non-issuance of visas without any explanation for Russian diplomats and administrative and technical personnel sent to Vienna by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take part in the work of the delegation. We are therefore obliged to raise this topic at today's meeting, about which we have, incidentally, given our esteemed Austrian colleagues advance warning.

Between August 2022 and January 2023, the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation applied for Schengen visas for staff members who were to come to Vienna on a short-term rotational basis to work as experts in the delegation. The requirements recently imposed by Austria calling for documents to be submitted 45 days in advance and fingerprinting were complied with. But in the end, only two of the 11 visas requested were issued. Two diplomats have been refused visas without an official reason, the others are still awaiting a response. Despite our repeated appeals to the Austrian Foreign Ministry to expedite the issuance of visas to members of the delegation, we have received no response to any of our notes in this regard.

The delay in issuing visas seriously undermines the smooth functioning of the delegation. These actions by Austria mean that only one-third of the staff of the delegation are currently working in the delegation. Other Russian diplomatic missions in Austria, including the embassy and the Permanent Missions of the Russian Federation to the OSCE and other international organizations in Vienna, face similar problems.

The delegation is compelled to draw attention to the fact that such behaviour does not comply with the obligations of the Republic of Austria under Section 20 of the Agreement between the Republic of Austria and the OSCE regarding the OSCE Headquarters of 14 June 2017, the provisions of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 and other international treaties. This is most regrettable. We hope that this is not being done deliberately and is not the aim of an Austrian Foreign Ministry visa sanctions policy. This situation needs to be resolved immediately.

We will be ready to raise the issue of non-compliance by the Republic of Austria with its OSCE host country obligations at future FSC meetings until the Austrian authorities fulfil their obligations in an unbiased manner and in good faith.

Thank you for your attention.