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**STATEMENT BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 93rd JOINT MEETING OF THE
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION AND THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 November 2024

On the Helsinki Final Act

Chairpersons,

The OSCE will approach an important milestone in 2025, namely the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, which laid the foundations of our Organization. In close tandem with the Charter of the United Nations, it envisaged the development of fairer, more solid and closer inter-State relations on the basis of respect and in the interests of joint constructive engagement. We invite you to look back into the past and be honest – even if only with yourselves – in trying to find out why the ideas from Helsinki, which were groundbreaking for those times, were never realized.

Every professional in our field is well aware that the Helsinki Final Act was the fruit of compromises and prolonged Herculean work by myriad politicians and diplomats. In one of his statements at the Conference in 1975, the then President of the Republic of Finland, Urho Kekkonen, put it very accurately: “The Final Act tells of the desire of countries differing from one another as to their history, social objectives and political systems to overcome the separating factors and lay the main emphasis on uniting aspects”. This wise politician felt that security in Europe and beyond was “possible only if the co-operation between our own continent and other countries progresses on the basis of mutual consideration of interests”. Now, what do you think is the reason that, over five decades, we have never managed to accomplish the task set?

It is evidently the same thing that prevented the provisions of the Charter for European Security (1999) from being implemented and a common and indivisible security community from being established throughout the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area in accordance with the tasking from the OSCE Summit held in Astana in 2010. Putting these documents into practice could create fundamentally new conditions for internal development and serve as a powerful stabilizing factor for strategic stability.

It is perhaps for that very reason that the numerous attempts undertaken (including by Russia) to endow the OSCE with legal personality, reform the Organization and adapt it to emerging challenges have petered out. The goal of our attempts was to create an open region-wide system of collective security that could serve as the basis for seeking mutually acceptable solutions anchored on international law, on the central role of the United Nations and on the legitimate interests of participating States. Everyone knows

how that ended. The West, driven by the United States of America and NATO, brusquely rejected all these efforts.

There began, instead, a process of fragmentation of the Euro-Atlantic area into zones with different levels of security. We proposed that this dichotomy be eliminated by concluding a Treaty on European Security that provided for the principle of the indivisibility of security being made legally binding. And, again, the collective West blocked that initiative.

The course taken by NATO – one aimed at “containing” Russia, brazenly extending the Alliance’s influence to various regions, even to regions outside its area of responsibility, and increasing its military strike potential in Europe right next to Russia’s borders – effectively triggered a rise in military tensions in Europe, pushing the continent to a dangerous brink. Russia’s attempts to get across the fact that it is impossible to enhance transparency in a context of confrontation, sanctions and rejection of military co-operation were unsuccessful. Equally fruitless was the Structured Dialogue, for within that framework it did not prove possible to organize a professional discussion of measures to reduce the intensity of activities along the contact line between Russia and NATO or of mechanisms for preventing dangerous military activities and incidents.

The answer to the complicated yet at the same time simple question as to why the “spirit of Helsinki” has not been put into practice, and how we have essentially ended up in a pre-war state, is plain as day. The point is that the set of principles negotiated in the 1970s envisaged their being implemented without fail in their totality and in an interlinked manner. Co-operation was to be premised on equality of rights, consideration of each other’s interests, mutual benefit and the sovereign equality of States without a selective application of norms and rules. Unfortunately, the countries of North America and Europe turned out not to be prepared for that. As history has shown, the West has no need for partners on an equal footing.

In this room we often hear talk of how Russia has allegedly violated the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, in particular the principle of the territorial integrity of Ukraine. That is not true. For NATO’s aggression against the former Yugoslavia made it clear to the whole world what value is attached to these principles, and what the OSCE itself is worth given that the Organization is meant to prevent conflicts and pave the way for the peaceful settlement of disputes. As for Ukraine, it was destroyed as a State by the Kyiv regime, which came to power ten years ago as the result of a coup d’état that was openly supported by the United States and its satellites. These countries flagrantly violated one of the key aspects of the principle of non-intervention, namely the inadmissibility of “direct or indirect assistance to terrorist activities, or to subversive or other activities directed towards the violent overthrow of the regime of another participating State”. Having emerged from the ruins of Ukrainian sovereignty, the Kyiv regime, which is a puppet on the string of Western countries and is nationalistic by nature, has completely destroyed the norms of the Helsinki Decalogue pertaining to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As we know, the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, adopted in 1970 by consensus through a United Nations General Assembly resolution, stipulates respect for “the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States conducting themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples ... and thus possessed of a government representing the whole people belonging to the territory”.

At various points in time, Crimea, Donbass and all of Novorossiya rejected the unconstitutional actions of the neo-Nazis in their country; they saw that they could potentially be turned into “second-class” people through a prohibition on the use of their native Russian language and on their enjoyment of Russian culture, and so they availed themselves of their right to self-determination.

Colleagues, forgive our curiosity, but who was it that told you that the concept of territorial integrity had priority over other notions enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act, above all the principle of self-determination? Thanks to the archives we know that your countries' leaders in 1975 thought differently. We have dug up an impressive trove of documents and verbatim records from the Helsinki meetings 50 years ago.

Thus, the central place of the right to self-determination was advanced in Helsinki by US President Gerald Ford. Here is one of his pronouncements: "Almost 200 years ago, the United States of America was born as a free and independent nation. The descendants of Europeans who proclaimed their independence ... asserted not only that all men are created equal, but that they are endowed with inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The founders of my country did not merely say that all Americans should have these rights, but all men everywhere should have these rights." And the process of separation from the mother country cannot be said to have taken place without bloodshed in that case. By the way, it is worth recalling that the Imperial Russian Navy protected the North American colonists from attacks from the sea by the British.

As a further example we may cite the words of Helmut Schmidt, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, who at the Helsinki Summit made no bones about the fact that his aim was "to work for a state of peace in Europe in which the German nation will regain its unity through free self-determination".

We could continue quoting ad infinitum. The bottom line, though, is that the principle of self-determination is being applied loosely when it suits the interests of Western powers.

If the principle of territorial integrity is so sacred and inviolable as it is being made out to be in this room, please explain why the contours of State borders in 1975 and 2024 look so different. How many States have been destroyed since then? Was it really always the case that everything happened peacefully, by consent of the parties, without external interference and taking into account the views of the populations living in the countries being divided? Hypocrisy in such matters is extremely dangerous.

That is why we consider today's discussion to be important. We hope that it will provide sensible people with the key to understanding deep-seated problems and differences in the Euro-Atlantic area. And, as we have already pointed out, that key consists in the non-selective implementation in good faith of international obligations in their entirety as a prerequisite for the predictability of inter-State relations. An approach whereby individual norms and provisions are applied on the basis of the principle of political expediency and ignoring the interests of others will continue to bring us closer to the dangerous scenario that our predecessors in Helsinki wanted to prevent.

As the result of such a course, the smell of gunpowder is once again in the air in Europe; instead of freedom of movement and of human contacts we have the wall erected by the Schengen regime and by national restrictions and prohibitions; trust has given way to confrontation and hatred; commercial and economic co-operation has been drastically curtailed by illegitimate sanctions; freedom of expression, the improvement of working conditions for the media, and the exchange of information have all fallen prey to the discriminatory approaches of Western countries wishing to have a monopoly on addressing all issues. It is fair to ask whether this really is the Europe envisioned by the founding fathers of the Helsinki Final Act. Of course not.

The point we are trying to get across today was nicely expressed in Helsinki by President Kekkonen of Finland, whom we have already mentioned. He said that "in recognizing the indivisibility of security and our mutual interdependence we also admit that the responsibility of each participating State is being

equalized.” We hope that, in 2025, the Finnish Chairmanship will be guided by the wise counsel of one who came before them.

Thank you for your attention.