



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
May 31, 2023

Thank you, Madam Chair,

Ukraine continues to defend itself against Russia’s brutal invasion, as is its right under Article 51 of the UN Charter. Even as Russian forces strike apartment buildings, schools, hospitals, critical energy infrastructure, and humanitarian workers and convoys bringing aid to people in the conflict zone -- Ukrainian defenders are bravely repelling these unprovoked acts of aggression. Russia’s military, now proudly in control of Bakhmut’s rubble, has suffered devastating losses and is left with demoralized troops, desperate leadership, and back-biting between its paramilitary Wagner group and its army.

The United States and our Allies and partners are working to ensure Ukraine’s Armed Forces have the capability to sustain their heroic defense. While we are transparent about our transfers of arms to Ukraine, Russia has imported weapons in an unlawful and opaque manner. Russia continues to obtain arms from countries such as Iran and North Korea, in violation of UN sanctions.

Russia is not the only participating State that has not been transparent. On May 19 – just 11 days ago -- Belarus reported to all of us that the entirety of its conventional arms transfers between it and Russia in 2022 consisted of 20, just twenty, 82mm mortars. This is fiction. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Arms Transfers Database, Belarus imported 29 Iskander launchers and missiles from Russia in 2022. There are also reports of many other such transfers. So, our question for Belarus is: Why are those tanks, launchers, missiles, and other munitions not included in your report, submitted 11 days ago, and covering all of 2022? And what else is Belarus failing to report?

Madam Chair,

Russia has proven to us time and time again that it does not adhere to its international obligations and commitments and has no intention of doing so. Russia lectures us in this Forum about the provisions of the UN Charter and the Geneva Conventions, and then, in the next breath, talks of liquidating prisoners of war and taking back its so-called “historic lands.” Regardless of what our Russian colleagues claim, or how many times they claim it, we all know such “historic lands” do not belong to Russia. Russia’s claims have no relevance or basis under international law.

I know that our dialogue has settled down into a predictable back-and-forth, but I ask all of our colleagues to consider each of these facts anew:

- Russia is the aggressor.
- Russia is violating Ukraine’s sovereignty.
- Russia is committing heinous atrocities, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.
- Russia is in breach of international law.
- Russia must withdraw from Ukraine’s internationally recognized territory or be ejected by force.
- And, regardless of the path that it chooses, Russia will be held to account.

Thank you, Madam Chair.