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**United States Mission to the OSCE**  
**U.S. Statement for the**  
**Forum for Security Co-operation:**  
**Opening Statement**

As delivered by Arms Control Counselor Daniel Wartko  
September 18, 2024

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It has been 937 days since Russia began its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which has resulted in tens of thousands of civilian casualties and millions displaced. Ukraine continues to inspire the world with its steadfast resolve to defend its sovereignty and territory. Over the past two and a half years, the world has witnessed Russian atrocities in Ukraine, but we have also witnessed the spirit and strength of the Ukrainian people who have defended their families, their communities, and their homeland.

The Ukrainian people have indeed shown extraordinary resilience.

Although Ukraine has made significant strides in reclaiming its territory from Russian forces, it still faces a difficult path as it continues through military struggle to stand against the Russian invaders, through the cleanup of dangerous, unexploded ordnance left behind throughout the war, and through the restoration of infrastructure deliberately destroyed by Russia. As Ukraine defends and rebuilds itself, restores its territory, and defends its sovereignty, the United States stands steadfast in our support.

Mr. Chair,

I would like to revisit the statement delivered last week by the delegate from the Russian Federation, because I noticed an interesting phrase that deserves a closer look. She said, and I'll quote, "The FSC still represents a unique political-military platform for dialogue among the states of the Eurasian continent, *the purpose of which in the current conditions is to prevent the uncontrolled escalation of confrontation through diplomatic efforts.*"

Consider that closely: “The purpose of the FSC is to prevent the *escalation* of confrontation.” It may sound good, but what it really means is that Russia doesn’t want to *resolve* the conflict; it wants to *maintain* the conflict at the level where it can attempt to slowly grind Ukraine into submission. It doesn’t want Ukraine to continue to increase its defensive capability. It doesn’t want any of us to come to the aid of an innocent victim being viciously attacked.

So, let’s correct the record: The FSC’s mandate includes conflict *prevention and resolution*. Recall that Russia completely rejected conflict prevention measures when members of this forum attempted to employ them in 2021 and 2022. Tragically and criminally, Moscow rejected these genuine attempts at conflict *prevention*. Russia was the state that instead chose *escalation* -- war over peace. Russia’s nuclear rhetoric has been reckless and irresponsible throughout this conflict. We should all reject the Russian Federation’s cynical attempts to scold us and lecture us on the purposes of this forum, while violating its obligations to uphold the foundational principles of the Helsinki Final Act, including respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty, refraining from the threat or use of force, the inviolability of frontiers, the territorial integrity of states, and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Mr. Chair,

As your Foreign Minister so elegantly said last week, the FSC is a forum created to ensure that we gather around the same table at the Hofburg in Vienna, even in times of profound disagreement. We have been charged to meet regularly as a body to increase dialogue and enhance cooperation and security amongst all 57 participating States. You have the full support of the United States as you carry out this mandate.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.