



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **AOB Statement on Russian ZAPAD-21**

September 8, 2021

The United States would like to thank the Russian Federation for its briefing on the ZAPAD-2021 exercise. At the same time, we emphasize that voluntary transparency measures are not a substitute for fulfilling the politically binding commitments under the Vienna Document, which increase transparency and confidence when fully implemented.

We would respectfully like to ask some questions about the exercise related to the Vienna Document. We have noted with concern the massive discrepancy between Russia's F-25 Vienna Document notification that "approximately 7,500 troops" would participate in ZAPAD-2021 and the Russian Defense Ministry's briefing (published on the MOD website) that the exercise would involve "about 200,000 military personnel." The Russian delegation reprised this information in today's briefing.

It is evident that such a large exercise would naturally be expected to exceed the Vienna Document threshold of 13,000 troops and be subject to observation, unlike the information provided by the Ministry of Defense, which states that "the maximum number of military personnel involved in maneuvers under a single operational command...will not exceed 6,400 servicemen."

Given this apparent contradiction, we ask the Russian Federation to explain to OSCE participating States how it interprets the phrase "single operational command," as its usage seems to be at odds with the conventional understanding of the term. We would further note in this regard that the Vienna Document stipulates that participating States will invite observers when "the engagement of formations of land forces...in the same exercise activity conducted under a single operational command" equals or exceeds 13,000 troops. "Engagement of land forces" and "exercise activity" are broad, encompassing terms, seemingly broader than the Defense Ministry's use of the term "maneuvers." Can the Russian Federation explain why ZAPAD-2021 as a whole should not be considered an "engagement of formations of land forces ... in the same exercise activity conducted under a single operational command"?

Moreover, in accordance with Constraining Provisions paragraph 68, which requires notification by November 15 of notifiable exercises in excess of 40,000 troops that a State "plans to carry out or host in the second subsequent year," why did the Russian Federation fail to notify ZAPAD-2021 no later than November 2019?

We would welcome clarification of these issues from the Russian Federation and again express appreciation for the briefing.