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Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks at the 28th OSCE Ministerial Council meeting, Stockholm, December 2, 2021

8-10 minutes

Madam Chairperson-in-Office,

Madam Secretary General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The coronavirus pandemic has become a test for the global economy and international relations. We are trying to overcome emerging challenges and adapt to new realities – collectively where possible. The OSCE’s role is essential here. I am pleased that one of the few documents that we are adopting today concerns climate. We need to be more active on the pandemic.

We have seen no progress in achieving the OSCE’s key goal of strengthening security based on cooperation, not confrontation.

The vision of a comprehensive, co-operative and indivisible security community throughout our shared OSCE area outlined by our leaders at the 2010 Astana Summit remains in place.

The OSCE is in a depressing state today. It has fallen hostage to the bloc discipline of the European Union and NATO, and is mired in petty agendas.

Our Western partners are striving to replace international law

with a “rules-based international order,” which they are trying to establish on the grounds of their own “exceptionalism.” We increasingly hear calls to break the rule of consensus; without that, the OSCE will lose its uniqueness and value as a platform for equal interaction of all participants. The “effective multilateralism” our partners champion will not work if one group of countries puts itself above others and uses pressure and unfair competition tools against those who disagree – such as “vaccine diplomacy,” media campaigns using fake news, and illegal sanctions. Their “liberal values” are being used as tools for shamelessly interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign states.

In a broader sense, a black-and-white model of bipolar confrontation is being built upon a new political and ideological foundation. The fall of the Berlin Wall marked the end of the Cold War, the end of the struggle between two systems. Now new walls are being erected by those who call themselves “civilised democracies” and consider it their mission to contain “authoritarian regimes.” The EU declares the “everything in the name of man, everything for the good of man” attitude while at the same time planning to build a wall 180 kilometres long and 5.5 metres high with barbed wire to fence off women and children in the Belarusian forest. The final act of the funeral of “detente.” Everybody will lose from new dividing lines in Europe and Eurasia.

The strategic stability architecture is rapidly collapsing. NATO is refusing to consider our proposals to de-escalate tensions and prevent any dangerous incidents constructively. On the contrary, the alliance’s military infrastructure is being irresponsibly moved closer to the Russian borders, with missile defence systems that can be used as strike systems deployed in Romania and

Poland. American medium-range missiles can soon be deployed in Europe. The nightmarish scenario of military confrontation is looming again – something our continent experienced after the well-known NATO Double-Track Decision. Europe remains silent. Ukraine is being fed with military equipment and egged on, which fuels Kiev's tendency to sabotage the Minsk agreements and supports the illusion of a military solution to the conflict.

NATO's decision at the April 2008 Bucharest summit that Georgia and Ukraine would become members is a mine planted under the very foundation of the European security architecture. It went off once, in August 2008, when Mikheil Saakashvili, euphoric over the prospect of joining NATO, risked an adventure that had dire consequences for Georgia and brought the security situation in Europe to a dangerous line. Those who are mechanically reciting the Bucharest decisions and insisting that "third countries" have no right to express their opinion on NATO's expansion are playing with fire. I am confident that they cannot fail to realise this.

I would like it to be very clear: turning our neighbouring countries into a springboard for confrontation with Russia is categorically unacceptable, as is the deployment of NATO forces in the immediate vicinity of areas that are of strategic importance for our security. I would like to draw attention to the November 30 Statement by the CSTO Permanent Council, which underscored the inadmissibility of provocative military activity in the territories bordering the CSTO zone of responsibility.

Security is either indivisible or non-existent. The OSCE members' political commitments – namely, to strive to build equal and indivisible security, not to strengthen their security at

the expense of others, and to pursue their own security interests while respecting other states' legitimate security interests – are enshrined in such fundamental documents as the Helsinki Final Act, the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, the Charter for European Security, and the Astana Declaration.

The time has come to translate the right words into long-term, legally binding security guarantees – an imperative to prevent a slide into a confrontational scenario.

President of Russia Vladimir Putin said at the ceremony for presenting foreign ambassadors' letters of credence on December 1: “We are not demanding any special terms for ourselves. We understand that any agreements must take into account the interests of both Russia and all other states in the Euro-Atlantic region. A calm and stable situation should be ensured for everyone and is needed by all without exception.”

He also noted the following: “While engaging in dialogue with the United States and its allies, we will insist on the elaboration of concrete agreements that would rule out any further eastward expansion of NATO and the deployment of weapons systems posing a threat to us in close proximity to Russia's territory.”

We will make relevant proposals in the near future. We expect them to be considered seriously, in essence and without excuses. We think that the OSCE can play a very useful role here.

The OSCE's potential for conflict resolution is of the essence. This organisation should send a clear signal to Kiev that revising the Minsk agreements is unacceptable because they are the uncontested basis for a settlement. The internal Ukrainian crisis will not be resolved as long as the ruling regime in Kiev

continues to evade fulfilling its international legal obligations, refraining from direct dialogue with Donetsk and Lugansk and from granting these territories a special status enshrined in the constitution. Attempts to “unseal” the key provisions of the Minsk agreements lead towards disaster. Today we are circulating the Minsk Package of Measures and the Declaration by the leaders of Germany, Russia, Ukraine and France adopted in support of that package, as well as the UN Security Council Resolution that approved both documents. It would be helpful for the participating states to refresh their memory. It would not hurt either to reread the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, including the part about direct talks with Donetsk and Lugansk. That mandate should be followed in all aspects, avoiding biased one-sided interpretations, a tendency the SMM leaders obviously have.

In the 1970s, amid international tension, countries convened the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The participating states’ political will for change and their readiness for difficult compromises made it possible to agree on the foundations of a fundamentally new security architecture. Today, we all have a responsibility to go back to those foundations, to reaffirm our commitment to the spirit of Helsinki. Only such a mutually respectful, unifying approach will allow us to preserve the organisation and tap its potential as a platform for making decisions on fundamental aspects of security and cooperation.

I would like to wish everyone good health, thank the Swedish Chairmanship and wish our Polish colleagues every success as the future OSCE Chairmanship.