

STATEMENT

**by H.E. Yuriy Filatov, Ambassador of Russia to Ireland
at the meeting with members of the Oireachtas
Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense**

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished members of the Committee,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome the opportunity to continue our dialogue on the matters of mutual interest on international and bilateral agenda. It is obvious from our perspective that the most pressing issue now, facing Russia, Europe and beyond, is the threat to Russian national security, resulting from the eastward expansion of NATO in recent years. The security situation on the Western borders of Russia is unacceptable and has to be dealt with.

On December 15, 2021 Russia proposed to the US and NATO to sign legally binding agreements on security guarantees. The key provisions of the draft documents include obligations of non-expansion of NATO, non-deployment of offensive weapons near Russian borders, return to the configuration of NATO's forces as at the time of the signing of the Russia-NATO Founding Act in May 1997, as well as confirmation that Russia and NATO do not consider each other as adversaries. The documents also imply mutual obligations of renunciation of the use of force, as well as interaction based on the principles of indivisible and equal security and mutual restraints in military planning.

Let me outline the nature of Russia's legitimate and reasonable concerns, that are at the heart of our initiative. Having officially proclaimed Russia as the main threat, NATO has been implementing a doctrine aimed at containing Russia. NATO's expansion led to the extension of the line of contact between Russia and NATO

member countries. By advancing more than 1000 km eastwards NATO acquired capabilities to use non-strategic weapons to hit targets deep in the Russian territory.

Furthermore, the legal foundations of the European security have been undermined by the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), and Open Skies Treaty - all with the tacit consent of NATO member countries.

Moreover, NATO by its current doctrine is tasked with achieving military superiority in all spheres (sea, land, air, cyberspace, space) and in all theatres. It has been consistently involving in its military activities other countries, especially the neutral states such as Finland and Sweden. Not to mention that NATO curtailed cooperation with Russia and imposed restrictions on the Russian permanent mission in Brussels, disrupting the political dialogue on security in Europe.

Recently NATO intensified combat training activities in the immediate vicinity of Russia's borders, including the Arctic, that involve strategic bombers and naval missile defense systems, as well as increased military drills in the Black Sea region (15 in 2021 against 8 in 2020) accompanied by more frequent (+60%) reconnaissance aircraft flights in the area.

NATO's greater capability of deployment of strike weapons at our borders, as well as the expansion of NATO's military infrastructure further to the East increases the risk of an armed conflict. Of deep concern is the advanced status of NATO-Ukraine "enhanced capabilities" partnership, Ukrainian military transformation on NATO's standards, as well as the presence of Alliance's military personnel in this country.

All that are facts on the ground and the reasons why Russia insists on legally binding agreements that would help stabilize security system in the Euro-Atlantic. The key to that is the principle of indivisibility of security. It is fundamental to the entire architecture of the European security and its accurate interpretation is crucial for the prospects of our dialogue with Western countries. The Charter for European Security signed at the OSCE summit in Istanbul in November 1999, that was signed for Ireland by then Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, formulates the basic rights and obligations of the participating States regarding this principle. It emphasizes the right of each participating State to be free to choose or change the way in which it ensures its security, including treaties of alliance, as they evolve, as well as the right to neutrality. The same paragraph of the Charter clearly conditions this right by the obligation of each State not to strengthen its own security at the expense of security of others. It also says that no State, group of States or organization may exercise preferential responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in the OSCE area or consider any part of it as its sphere of influence. At the OSCE summit in Astana in December 2010, the leaders of our countries approved a declaration, confirming this integral package of interrelated obligations.

However, Western countries continue to pick and choose from this package only the provisions they want, to be exact - the right of a State to be free to choose alliances to ensure exclusively its own security. They shyly omit the clause “as they evolve”, as it was also an integral part of the understanding of the “indivisibility of security”, implying mandatory withdrawal of military alliances from the original function of deterrence, as well as their integration into the all-European architecture on collective,

rather than a narrow group basis. The principle of indivisibility of security is selectively interpreted to justify the irresponsible policy of NATO expansion.

The Western governments also try to ignore one of the key OSCE documents – the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, which says clearly that participating States shall “take into account the legitimate security concerns of other States” when choosing methods of ensuring security including participation in alliances and “maintain military capabilities commensurate with legitimate individual or collective security needs”.

I’d like to emphasize - the indivisibility of security means that security can be either one for all or none at all. As the Istanbul document stipulates, every OSCE participant has an equal right to security, not just NATO members that interpret this right as referring exclusively to the members of this North Atlantic club.

One can’t but acknowledge that decidedly anti-Russian actions and rhetoric by the US, NATO, and EU leaders have reached a level of absurdity. We are witnessing the daily drumbeat about “imminent Russian invasion in Ukraine” as well as readiness by the West to respond to that “invasion” with massive and destructive sanctions against Russia. Any unbiased and serious observer would note, that not only there are no facts on the ground to support such “invasion” fantasy, not only Russia has stated repeatedly that it does not have any intention to attack Ukraine or anybody else, but there are no even hypothetically any political, economic, military or any other reasons for such “invasion”. Our conclusion is that a rather dangerous game of shadowboxing is going on for the sake of certain political agenda in Washington, Brussels, and European capitals. It is indeed dangerous because it might push the current Kiev government to

undertake another military adventure in the east of the country, which would be catastrophic for Ukraine and for entire Europe.

We have to be candid – the EU, of which Ireland is a member-state, has played far from constructive role in Ukrainian affairs over recent years. We can't but recall a pivotal moment in the modern Ukrainian history – February 2014, when the US and the EU provoked and supported a bloody unconstitutional coup in Kiev against legitimate government that was, by the way, not even close to being “pro-Russian”. As a result radical nationalist forces came to power in Kiev. It is they who started a military conflict – essentially, civil war – in the Eastern regions of Ukraine, where local population did not accept this coup and its nationalist agenda that includes elements of neo-Nazi ideology. People there didn't want to follow Kiev's orders to ban the use of the Russian language, which is the mother tongue for a large part of Ukrainians. They stood for their right to maintain the way of life they are used to, preserve their cultural identity and traditions, protect their homes and families from aggressive neo-Nazi bands. People of Donetsk and Lugansk turned out to be quite successful in defending their land.

Soon afterwards some Europeans began to realize what happened. France and Germany joined Russia in the so-called “Normandy Format” to convince the Kiev regime as well as leaders of Donetsk and Lugansk to sit at the negotiating table and sign the Minsk Protocol. This document remains the only viable way to resolve the internal Ukrainian conflict. “The package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk Agreements” was endorsed in the resolution of the UN Security Council 2202 in 2015, so it is an international legally binding act mandatory for implementation by Kiev, Donetsk, and

Lugansk. It is important to bear in mind, in this context, that Russia has never been de jure or de facto a party of the conflict.

Right now the most important thing that the EU as well as the US could do to achieve peace in Ukraine is literally to force the Kiev government into implementing the Minsk Agreements. Without such pressure there is no realistic chance that current regime in Ukraine would undertake any steps to fulfill its obligations, starting with a direct dialogue with Donetsk and Lugansk. This month Russia serves as a Chair of the UN Security Council. On February 17 we have scheduled a meeting of the Council on the subject of the implementation of the Minsk Agreements and invited permanent representative of Ukraine to attend. This will be a perfect chance for the Council to insist that its decisions shall be implemented.

Mr.Chairman, I would like to conclude with what I have started – security in Europe. Regrettably, situation is by no means better that in December. Response from the US to the draft of agreement that we have received does not give ground for optimism – our key demands on the non-extension of NATO are being ignored. Our own answer to that is still being assessed. Nevertheless, it is abundantly clear, that we have to find a way to safeguard the interests of security of all involved in the process – Ukraine, European Union, Russia. It would only be possible with serious and responsible attitude to proposals by Russia. We would hope that all reasonable, dialogue-oriented countries, - including Ireland, - will support the pursuit of peace and stability in Europe.

Thank you.