

Russia must engage in credible risk management to prevent miscalculations: UK statement to the OSCE

24.2.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

Politico-Military Counsellor, Ankur Narayan, recalls Russia's pattern of reassurance without transparency and refusal to engage OSCE risk-reduction mechanisms before its full-scale invasion of Ukraine - and calls on Russia to explain what practical steps it is now prepared to take to reduce escalation risks and prevent miscalculation.

Thank you, Madam Chair. The United Kingdom's approach in this Forum is consistent: to hold each other to account against shared OSCE commitments, such as calling for Russia to end its illegal war of aggression in Ukraine. The UK has also used this Forum to manage risks and prevent unintended escalation.

Last Summer, Russia's actions raised acute risks of miscalculation, including through incursions into the airspace of NATO Allies. In response, the UK used this Forum to ask Russia clear, practical questions about responsibility, intent, and steps to prevent recurrence. This was not for show. It was because the FSC is one of the few places designed for precisely these exchanges.

Our experience in early 2022 shows why escalation management matters. On 26 January 2022, Russia briefed the FSC on a voluntary basis about its joint "Union State" military exercise with Belarus. Russia asserted: "The number of participants in the exercise and the number of major weapon systems covered by the Vienna Document 2011 do not exceed the threshold subject to notification defined in it".

When participating States continued to raise concerns in the Forum, Russia did not engage constructively. On 2 February 2022, Russia labelled concerns, about a "imminent Russian invasion of Ukraine", as "hysteria" and said: "Russia has stated at the highest level that we have no plans to 'invade' Ukraine."

When participating States triggered the Vienna Document's risk-reduction provisions to reduce uncertainty and prevent miscalculation about the extraordinary troop buildup, Russia was absent from all the mandated meetings. Russia even sent an F41 notification during the joint FSC-PC to accuse Ukraine of "deflecting the OSCE State members' attention away from an armed solution of the internal Ukraine conflict".

Madam Chair, that sequence is precisely the kind of behaviour we cannot afford to see repeated. One, reassurance without transparency. Two, voluntary briefing without meaningful risk-reduction engagement. And three, the use of parallel messaging while not answering questions being raised through OSCE mechanisms.

This is why the UK continues to approach the FSC as a forum for practical escalation management, and why we will continue to ask questions that require clear answers. In 2025, the UK framed our approach in the same way when seeking clarification from Russia on airspace incidents. We asked what its intent was if incidents were deliberate, and what steps Russia was taking to prevent recurrence. We are still awaiting responses.

Today, mindful of the risks demonstrated in early 2022, we ask Russia a forward-looking, practical question:

Looking ahead, what practical steps is Russia prepared to take within the OSCE framework to improve transparency and reduce the risk of miscalculation arising from large-scale or prolonged military activities?

If the Russian delegation requires time to consult with Moscow to provide an accurate response, we encourage it to do so. Credible escalation management depends on accurate and genuine answers. And on a demonstrated willingness to use risk-reduction mechanisms in good faith. Thank you
Madam Chair.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/russia-must-engage-in-credible-risk-management-to-prevent-miscalculations-uk-statement-to-the-osce>