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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1401st MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 December 2022

**In response to the report by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities,  
Mr. Kairat Abdrakhmanov**

Mr. Chairperson,

High Commissioner, esteemed Kairat Kudaybergenovich, we welcome you to the Permanent Council. We have carefully studied the report and presentation, and shall comment on a number of issues.

We are deeply disappointed by the biased appraisals of the special military operation in Ukraine, their public dissemination and the support of the institution of High Commissioner for the Western alliance countries' extrabudgetary activities in Ukraine, carried out under the OSCE banner and bypassing Russia's objections. The same goes for the dubious interpretations together with selective references to individual norms of international law, the attempts to make assessments on the territorial affiliation of particular regions, the participation in events with an overtly biased political slant, and the discussion of a so-called "war against Ukraine by Russia" with the Kyiv regime's handlers, which are supplying that regime with lethal weapons to kill Russians and Ukrainians. None of this is provided for by the mandate of the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

At the same time, numerous discriminatory actions and statements by Ukrainian officials calling for violence continue to fail to elicit any visible reaction. In particular, the former Ambassador of Ukraine to Kazakhstan, Petro Vrublevskiy, said in August that "the main task now is to kill as many Russians as possible so that this does not have to be done by future generations". We call upon you, High Commissioner, to duly respond to this egregious example of hate-inciting speech.

We share your view on how "any attempts at assimilation against one's will by the State or third parties [are] prohibited according to international law." We would remind you that since 2014, following the coup d'état, the Kyiv regime has proclaimed the fight against the Russian language to be one of the goals in building a "new Ukraine". A policy of Ukrainization of all spheres of public life and assimilation of national minorities and ethnic groups for the purposes of establishing an ethnocratic regime has *de facto* been made the law of the land there. Moreover, the differential nature of the measures taken in relation to various national communities is striking.

Only the Crimean Tatars, Krymchaks and Karaites have been placed in a privileged position by the Kyiv regime. Their rights to education in their native language and to the creation of their own educational institutions and media outlets were enshrined in law in July 2021. However, as far as other nationalities and ethnic groups are concerned, the Ukrainian Government is pursuing a consistent policy – albeit with different degrees of harshness – aimed at securing a dominant role for the Ukrainian language and reducing the scope for using other languages in the public space.

The Hungarians, Romanians and Bulgarians living in that country have been shown certain preferential treatment: it is not until September 2023 that they will have to switch to Ukrainian as the language of instruction. In secondary schools the teaching of some subjects in the languages of European Union member countries will continue. Moreover, the most favourable conditions were introduced for Poles in 2022. The country's authorities have thus taken an unprecedented step, effectively giving equal rights to Ukrainian and Polish citizens on its territory.

Such an approach stands in stark contrast to the attitude towards the Russian and Russian-speaking population. Since the adoption of a series of Russophobic laws from 2017 onwards – on education, on full general secondary education, on supporting the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the State language – the Kyiv regime has consistently been working towards the eradication of the Russian language, Russian culture and our shared history from all spheres of life in that country. The purpose is obvious, namely to change the identity of a huge part of the population of Ukraine, to bring about forced assimilation. In addition, these dangerous trends towards discrimination of national minorities and ethnic groups are being accompanied there by a flourishing of neo-Nazism and the glorification of Nazism.

High Commissioner,

We note with satisfaction the attention you pay to the need to “maintain the space” for using the Russian language and preserving the identity of the Russian and Russian-speaking population in several OSCE participating States.

We share your concerns regarding Latvia, the authorities of which continue systematically to extirpate the Russian language from that country's life. In our view, the amendments to the Education Act and the General Education Act adopted in late September of this year will not simply lead to “far-reaching reduction of minority language education”. With this discriminatory step, the authorities intend effectively to close the book on more than two centuries of Russian-language education in the country.

However, the Latvian Government does not intend to leave it at that. At the instigation of the country's outgoing Minister of Education and Science, Anita Muižniece, the plan is again being discussed for gradually phasing out the teaching of Russian as a second foreign language in schools from the academic year 2026/2027 onwards. It is being proposed to replace it with the languages of EU member countries or the languages of countries “with which intergovernmental treaties have been concluded”. The Russian language does not fall into either of these categories.

Significantly, the statistics indicate that in the academic year 2021/2022 the Russian language was taught at 536 of the 660 Latvian schools – and, as a matter of fact, it was taught as the second foreign language at more than 300 of them. Moreover, a majority of respondents from schools stressed the importance of studying it, given that “the need for a knowledge of Russian is dominant in society”. In this regard the assessments by Liene Tāse, the director of the Zemgale secondary school in Latvia, are remarkable. In an interview with the nationalistic-leaning newspaper *Latvijas Avīze* she said: “We will be depriving children if they don't get to learn Russian.”

We urge you, High Commissioner, not to slacken in your attention to the situation in Estonia in relation to the attempts to eradicate the Russian language from that country's education system. As of this academic year, the number of lessons a week in the Estonian language has been increased from two to four in grades 1–3 and from four to five in grades 4–7. The plan is that from 1 September 2024, primary school teaching (that is, in grades 1–4) will have to be entirely in the State language. Basic school leavers (nine grades) will be expected to have B1 level proficiency in Estonian, while upper secondary school leavers (12 grades) will need to be proficient at the C1 level. Draconian requirements are being aggressively imposed for the teachers at Russian schools. In particular, they must demonstrate a high-level command of the State language. They are given just two years to prepare themselves to teach in the Estonian language. The relevant department will check whether they have an “appropriate” mastery of Estonian. Its inspectors will be authorized to carry out such “supervision” even during classes. These requirements will force many teachers to quit their jobs, which will lead to a deterioration in the Russian-language segment of the education system.

The aforementioned facts pointing to a linguistic and educational “Inquisition”, together with the persistence of the shameful phenomenon of mass statelessness, require your close attention.

High Commissioner,

We welcome your attention to the situation of racial minorities and indigenous peoples, including in the OSCE participating States across the ocean. All the more so as there are plenty of causes for concern.

The conclusions of the United Nations Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Fernand de Varennes, following his visit to the United States of America in late 2021 are depressing. Let us cite the most acute problems in US public policy. It is noted in his report that “the legal landscape for the protection of human rights inside the country is also far from comprehensive or even coherent. ... there are exceptions for territories that are not States, and therefore hundreds of thousands of United States citizens, mainly minorities and indigenous peoples, do not fully enjoy equal rights with other Americans.” Moreover the Special Rapporteur was presented with “convincing evidence that millions of Americans, particularly minorities, are facing ... inequality, discrimination and ... dramatic increases in hate speech and hate crimes”. They often find themselves deprived of basic voting rights.

The situation of indigenous peoples in Canada is far from ideal, especially in the prison system. In May of this year, the Auditor General of Canada, Karen Hogan, conducted an audit of the federal penal service (Correctional Service Canada). Among other findings, it was established that the officers of that agency placed a disproportionately large number of members of the indigenous population in cells with a higher security level. Prisoners were kept in custody longer than the term of their sentence. The Auditor General described this practice as clear evidence of “systemic racism”.

There are still problems in ensuring the rights of the indigenous population in French Polynesia as well, not least with regard to recognizing the Polynesian languages alongside French as official languages of that overseas collectivity. In addition, just a few days ago, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed its concern over racist remarks by French politicians, especially in the media and on the Internet, against certain ethnic groups, including Africans and persons of Arab and African descent. And likewise over law enforcement officers' prejudiced attitude towards these people.

High Commissioner,

We believe that you should keep a closer watch on problems related to the situation of national minorities and indigenous peoples “west of Vienna”. The examples we have cited confirm that narrowing the thematic or geographical scope of the High Commissioner’s activities is counterproductive. In closing, allow me to wish you and the staff at your Office success in your further work and, of course, robust health.

Thank you for your attention.