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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1455th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 December 2023

**In response to the address by the Personal Representatives of the
Chairperson-in-Office on tolerance and non-discrimination**

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome to the Permanent Council the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism, Rabbi Andrew Baker, and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also Focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions, Professor Regina Polak. We are especially pleased to see Ms. Polak here so that we can voice our concerns to her in person. Our three written requests to her have gone unanswered.

The Russian Federation has consistently advocated increasing the visibility of the work carried out under the highly responsible mandates entrusted to the Personal Representatives. We regret that the OSCE Chairmanship of North Macedonia never managed to appoint a Personal Representative for countering Islamophobia, despite the numerous issues that required close scrutiny from such a Representative. We trust that next year Malta will fill this tangible gap in the Organization's personnel, given the wide range of problems concerning religious rights and freedoms in the OSCE area.

Mr. Chairperson,

The state of affairs in a number of Western OSCE participating States continues to deteriorate, in particular against the backdrop of the escalating situation in the Middle East. However, this upsurge in intolerance has not come out of nowhere, but is the result of long-standing problems in those countries, which have tended to be justified by the supposedly absolute nature of the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly or else simply hushed up. These negative trends have been accompanied by attempts to falsify history and forget the lessons of the past, and also by encouragement of the glorification of Nazism and former Nazi criminals, often – as for example, in the Baltic countries and Poland – at the State level.

Given this “anything goes” attitude in NATO member States, a fertile ground for racism and the ideas of racial superiority, xenophobia, neo-Nazism, discrimination against Christians and Muslims, and

anti-Semitism has been forming for decades. A recent comment by the Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Michael O’Flaherty, that anti-Semitism is a “deeply ingrained racism in European society” is telling in this regard. At the same time, he also called for condemnation of “all forms of hatred that manifest themselves in Europe, including hatred against Muslims”.

Let us give you some concrete examples. According to the Federal Criminal Police Office of Germany, more than 11,000 hate-motivated incidents against certain population groups were recorded in the country in 2022. Over 10,000 xenophobic crimes, more than 3,000 racist crimes and some 2,500 anti-Semitic crimes fall under this category. In the first half of 2023, 258 crimes against Muslims were registered. As we now speak, an uncontrolled and unmanageable rise in anti-Semitism and nationalism is being observed there. Representatives of the German Federal Association of Departments for Research and Information on Antisemitism have received reports that 994 anti-Semitic incidents were recorded between 7 October and 9 November this year.

According to the Anti-Defamation League, a US non-governmental organization, 1,019 cases of anti-Semitism were recorded in the United Kingdom between 7 October and 3 November this year. This figure is almost five times higher than for the corresponding period in 2022. Judaeophobia is by no means the only problem within the foggy shores of Albion. We urge Professor Polak to take note of the findings of the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, published in early October following its visit to the United Kingdom in January of this year. In particular, they expressed deep concern in these findings about the situation of inequality faced by people of African descent, which is underpinned by systemic racism and racial disparity and by the biased attitude towards this category of persons on the part of law enforcement and judicial officers. Furthermore, the experts noted that the state of affairs had deteriorated since their last visit to the country in 2012.

The situation in France remains extremely difficult. According to Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin, more than 1,500 anti-Semitic acts or remarks have been registered in the country since the beginning of October this year. This is three times higher than the total for all of 2022. There have also been incidents involving discrimination against Muslims, including repeated threats sent to mosques. The figures for the country in 2022 are also shocking. The relevant ministry registered 12,600 racially, ethnically and religiously motivated offences, of which more than half were criminal offences. The number of such crimes increased by 5 per cent compared to 2021 and totalled 6,600 (versus 6,300 in 2021). These statistics indicate the growing danger posed to society and the ethnic groups living there by the acts in question.

A sharp upsurge in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia has been observed in the United States of America. On the authority of the aforementioned Anti-Defamation League, 312 incidents took place between 7 and 23 October this year, whereas during the corresponding period in 2022 that NGO reported 64 cases. According to the latest data from the Council on American-Islamic Relations, it received 1,283 complaints and requests for help between 7 October and 4 November this year. In 2022 the figure was half that, with the Council receiving around 400 complaints in an average 29-day period.

The situation in Canada remains challenging. According to police data, 15 anti-Semitic incidents and five anti-Islamic acts occurred in Toronto between 7 and 25 October this year. In Montreal, the police recorded 14 Islamophobic and 38 anti-Semitic crimes.

Mr. Chairperson,

The approaches of the Western alliance countries to religion may be clearly discerned in the outrages committed by the Kyiv regime. With the support of its handlers in Washington and among the Brussels bloc,

the gross infringement of the rights of believers and priests of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) continues in Ukraine.

The provocation and encouragement of religious schism in the country by the Kyiv regime's Western handlers are taking increasingly monstrous forms each time. A sad culmination was reached recently – in October of this year, the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) adopted at the first reading draft law No. 8371 on amendments to certain laws of Ukraine on the activities of religious organizations in Ukraine. The initiators of this new piece of legislation do not hide the fact that its main goal is to delegitimize the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, ban it and then simply eradicate it. We would remind you that we are talking about a Church that has historically played a key role in society.

The repression was preceded by an active media campaign to vilify UOC priests and parishioners and then to call for their prosecution. The Security Service of Ukraine has opened criminal cases against 70 priests, including 16 metropolitan bishops.

Let us cite a few specific examples. In early November this year in Uzhhorod, the 68-year-old Archpriest Dmitry Sidor, dean of the UOC Cathedral of the Holy Cross, received call-up papers to serve in the Ukrainian armed forces. Earlier, a criminal case was opened against him for inciting sectarian strife. On 20 November this year, the media was awash with shocking footage that showed how people in military uniforms invaded the UOC Monastery of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Cherkasy while the police looked on and did nothing. Several people were injured as a result of this aggressive attack to take control of the monastery. The Cherkasy eparchy reported that the brethren together with their Father Superior were evicted from the premises.

In early November this year, law enforcement personnel armed with assault rifles attempted to break into the premises of the Holy Ascension Monastery in Bancheny, where an orphanage for children with disabilities is located. For more than half a year, the Security Service of Ukraine has been persecuting the orphanage's founder and head of the monastery, Metropolitan Longin, who has more than 400 minors in his care. He is accused of inciting religious enmity by criticizing the schismatic Orthodox Church of Ukraine.

We are unfortunately obliged to note that our requests to Ms. Polak have gone unanswered. We regard this silence as encouragement of the criminal actions of that State's authorities. The stance of the Brussels bloc, which prefers not to indicate its position regarding the UOC's persecution by a "subordinate" regime, can also be characterized in similar terms.

Mr. Chairperson,

The aforementioned topics once again confirm the existence of serious long-standing problems in the OSCE area, which require a substantive response from the relevant institutions of our Organization. We once again call upon the Personal Representatives to take a professional approach in performing their functions, to be guided by the consensus concepts adopted by all the participating States and to refrain from promoting pro-Western attitudes.

Thank you for your attention.