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PC.DEL/857/22  
10 June 2022

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1377th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

9 June 2022

**On the ongoing gross violations of the rights of the Russian and Russian-speaking population by some Western OSCE participating States**

Mr. Chairperson,

This year, the topic of violations of the rights of the Russian and Russian-speaking population by a number of Western OSCE participating States has gained particular poignancy. That being said, it would be wrong to assert that until February 2022 Russians were not subjected to discrimination. Before the start of the special military operation in Ukraine, Russophobia was simply latent and smouldering. Now, though, everything has come into the open.

As a result, natives of our country have encountered the broadest possible range of violations of their rights, harassment and even physical violence when abroad. Over the past few months, the use of posters with the slogan “GOOD Russian = DEAD Russian” by owners of public venues in the United Kingdom has become widespread. In major Canadian cities – Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver – a Russophobic hysteria may be observed that is being whipped up both by the local Ukrainian diaspora and by the country’s officials. According to open-source data, the law enforcement authorities of Calgary alone have received several dozens of complaints about Russophobic attacks against the city’s Russian-speaking inhabitants. There have been numerous instances of Russian children being picked on at schools across the country.

Similar unhealthy tendencies as regards the official authorities’ encouragement of Russophobia are at work in the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania and Spain, among other countries. They are described in greater detail in a report prepared by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that is entitled “On violations of the rights of Russian citizens and compatriots in foreign countries”. This fact-based document has been posted on the Ministry’s website. The document is available in Russian; the preparation of an English-language version will be completed in the very near future. We invite everyone to peruse it.

Mr. Chairperson,

As far as ingeniousness in the justification of Russophobia is concerned, no one is a match for the country chairing our Organization, namely Poland. That is understandable, since according to a survey

conducted by the Polish periodical *Mysł Polska*, Poland is the country with the greatest number of Russophobes. A negative attitude towards Russia was expressed by 87 per cent of respondents, and “on the basis of that they won the title of most Russophobic nation in the world”. This high degree of anti-Russian sentiment in Polish society confirms the need to relocate the OSCE human dimension events and the headquarters of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights outside Poland. In such circumstances the Polish Government is clearly unable to ensure the appropriate level of security for the participants in international events.

The policy of the official authorities of Latvia, which as it is was already geared towards nationalism, has since February turned into a veritable orgy of Russophobia. At each Permanent Council meeting we are obliged to address what is happening in that country. This week is no exception. The Cabinet of Ministers has adopted amendments to the Education Act and the General Education Act which provide for a transition to teaching in the Latvian language by 2025. The amendments adopted will also extend to private educational institutions. These discriminatory steps by Latvia are in gross violation of its international commitments, including OSCE commitments. In particular, paragraph 19 of the CSCE Vienna Concluding Document (1989) says that the participating States “will protect and create conditions for the promotion of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities on their territory”. Paragraph 59 of the same document establishes that the participating States “will ensure that persons belonging to national minorities or regional cultures on their territories can maintain and develop their own culture in all its aspects, including language, literature and religion; and that they can preserve their cultural and historical monuments and objects”. These provisions are also echoed in the 1990 Copenhagen Document. The 1999 Istanbul Summit Declaration altogether emphasizes the commitment of the OSCE participating States to “ensure that laws and policies fully respect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, in particular in relation to issues affecting cultural identity”. Not to mention the fact that these discriminatory steps are in violation of that country’s Constitution. We expect an appropriate response from the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities to this blatant discrimination against the country’s Russian-speaking inhabitants.

Additionally, the country’s authorities have also pitched in to an active anti-Russian campaign in the media space. As is known, the European Union authorities banned the broadcasting of a further four Russian television channels on the territory of EU member countries as part of the sixth package of sanctions, namely Rossiya 24, Rossiya RTR, RTR Planeta and TV Centre International. Russian media are unable to operate, be it via satellite or via the Internet.

A few days later, evidently drawing inspiration from the decision of its patrons in Brussels, the Latvian Government went even further. On 6 June, the Latvian authorities banned the broadcasting of 80 Russian television channels in the country. Among those banned are such purely entertainment channels as Illusion+ and Okhota i Rybalka (“Hunting and Fishing”).

Meanwhile, the National Electronic Mass Media Council of Latvia has issued a licence to broadcast in the country to the Dozhd television channel, which has suspended its operations in Russia at the behest of the Prosecutor General’s Office on account of its “calls for extremist activities”. There you have the Latvian Government’s double standards. It is natural to ask how after this one can take seriously all the assertions about the alleged lack of freedom of the press in Russia, which, what is more, are even accompanied by accusations to the effect that our country’s population is deprived of free access to information?

Mr. Chairperson,

Ukraine, which has been steered externally since February 2014, has been violating the linguistic and educational rights of the country’s Russian-speaking population for eight years. This is confirmed by a

chronology of the ban on the Russian language<sup>1</sup>, which has a direct bearing on the ability of Russian-speaking citizens to preserve their identity.

Furthermore, over the past few months, Ukrainian nationalists and local authorities have been persecuting with redoubled efforts Russian culture and everything connected with Russia. It is even planned to set up a dedicated council at the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine tasked with the de-Russification and decolonization of the country.

Let us cite just a few examples of these Russophobic “games”. In early June, the Ternopil city council published a decree forbidding buskers from performing songs in the Russian language. On 1 June, the Director of the Ukrainian Book Institute, Oleksandra Koval, stated: “It is precisely such Russian poets and writers as Alexander Pushkin and Fyodor Dostoevsky who laid the foundations of the ‘Russkiy Mir’ concept. This is indeed very harmful literature: it can influence people’s views. That is why it is my personal opinion that these books should be removed from public and school libraries.” On 7 June, it became known that the Ministry of Education of Ukraine had excluded Lev Tolstoy’s novel *War and Peace* from the school curriculum, together with a number of other works of Russian literature. What will come next? The burning of non-Ukrainian books on Independence Square?

Mr. Chairperson,

The manifestations of intolerance in the OSCE’s area of responsibility need to be studied properly and impartially. The countries that are “paragons of democracy” formally proclaim their commitment to the principle of the rule of law. However, the aggressive persecution of Russians shows convincingly that, in reality, Western societies have not only not managed to rid themselves of discriminatory and racist attitudes, but continue to encourage these.

Thank you for your attention.

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1 On 23 February 2014, the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) stripped the Russian language of its status as a regional language. On 29 August 2015, the Russian language was removed from Ukrainian passports. On 16 June 2016, linguistic quotas were introduced for radio and television (25 per cent broadcasting in the Russian language). On 5 September 2017, use of the Russian language was banned in the field of education. As from 25 April 2019, all public officials, employees and those working in retail, services, education, medicine and culture have been expected to master the Ukrainian language and to use it when performing their duties. The quotas for the Russian language were reduced to 10 per cent. All large-scale cultural events have to be held in the Ukrainian language. Since 25 April 2019, all websites and pages on social media have had to be presented in Ukrainian or, alternatively, a Ukrainian-language version provided. As from 16 April 2020, all advertising has had to be in the Ukrainian language. Since 16 July 2020, papers in the sciences and medicine have had to be published in Ukrainian or English. As from 16 July 2020, public transport signage has had to be in the Ukrainian language. On 6 July 2020, the Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council, Oleksii Danilov, said: “There are certain things ... For example, the question of language is a very important, indeed fundamental one for the State. There must be no second language here, that is, Russian – not because it is not necessary to study it but because there is no need to know Russian at all. When it comes to Ukraine, there should be only Ukrainian as the State language.” As from 16 January 2021, all enterprises in the services sector regardless of the ownership structure, including online shops, have had to switch to Ukrainian. On 16 July 2021, a compulsory examination to test knowledge of Ukrainian was introduced for civil servants. Since 16 July 2021, guided tours have had to be conducted in the Ukrainian language (except for foreign-language ones); at least 50 per cent of books have had to be sold in the Ukrainian language; and all films and television series have had to be aired exclusively in the Ukrainian language. On 16 January 2022, a linguistic quota was introduced for print media. On 16 April 2022, the State Language Protection Commissioner, Taras Kremen, said: “At all schools where such a subject as ‘Russian language’ has so far been taught, this must be replaced with other subjects or, alternatively, the percentage of class time spent on other existing subjects increased from the new academic year onwards.” On 15 April 2022, the Education Ombudsman, Serhii Horbachov, said: “If we agree to the Russian language being taught, every lesson would have to begin with the words: ‘Russia is an aggressor country. Putin is a war criminal. Russia is guilty of genocide against the Ukrainian people.’”