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**STATEMENT BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1436th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 July 2023

On the World Day against Trafficking in Persons

Mr. Chairperson,

The World Day against Trafficking in Persons was established in 2013 through United Nations General Assembly resolution 68/192 on improving the co-ordination of efforts against trafficking in persons. Much is being done in this area at the global level under the guidance of the United Nations. In our Organization there is also a robust set of relevant commitments and it is important to focus on their implementation.

All the more so since, despite the efforts being undertaken, trafficking continues to flourish and demand for “live goods” to grow. Individuals from socially disadvantaged groups are at particular risk – that is, migrants, refugees, orphaned children, and women and children living below the poverty line. In May 2023, experts involved in the United Nations Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review noted corresponding trends in, for example, France, Luxembourg, Montenegro and Romania.

These manifestations are also present in Ukraine. At the end of June 2023, a former educator, Denys Varodi, was caught red-handed and arrested in the Zakarpattia region. He was trying to ferry an 11-month-old boy out of the country into Slovakia in order to sell him there for 25,000 US dollars. According to information from local sources, this man was on the lookout for infants aged up to two years and had already managed to wrap up several such “deals”. We note that this incident has not been treated as a matter of public concern be it by the representatives of Western countries, be it by members of the Kyiv regime itself. Similarly, the sexual exploitation of those female inhabitants of Ukraine who, for various reasons, have found themselves in EU countries is being hushed up.

Mr. Chairperson,

The problem of minors becoming involved in criminal activities is being flagged by United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on human rights and relevant State agencies. According to Germany’s Federal Criminal Police Office, over the past year, the number of criminal cases opened in connection with the exploitation of children has increased by almost 23 per cent. The average age of victims was 15 years.

In view of such dismaying indicators, countries should ideally give priority attention to tackling these problems. In practice, however, they prefer to turn a blind eye to existing challenges.

Most alarming indeed is the situation in the United States of America, where the use of child labour has become industrialized. This concerns mainly orphans and children from migrant families or lone-parent households. According to several NGOs, more than 130,000 girls and boys entered the country in 2021 unaccompanied by adults. Specialized institutions that are meant to take care of their resettlement cannot cope with such an influx. The statistics indicate that contact is lost with a third of children who arrive in the country legally. We do not rule out the possibility of their becoming the victims of labour or sexual exploitation.

The violations of children's rights in the United States in connection with intercountry adoption deserve special attention. As a result of the investigations carried out, including by journalists, an illegal network of intermediaries and human traffickers has been uncovered. Detailed information on this systemic problem can be found in a report by the Russian Foreign Ministry's Commissioner for Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law published on the Ministry's website.¹ We urge the OSCE Chairmanship of North Macedonia, the relevant units of the OSCE Secretariat and the executive structures, as well as the participating States, to consult that report.

The inadequacy of measures to protect migrant children in the United Kingdom was flagged by the former OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Valiant Richey, following his visit to that country in late 2022. These assessments are corroborated by NGOs and the media. In June 2023, it became known that some 400 migrant children, who were being housed not in specialized institutions but in ordinary hotels, had gone missing. A month later, the disappearance of more than a hundred minors was confirmed by the UK Home Office as well. It is believed that they were abducted by malefactors seeking to subsequently induce them into unlawful activities. If one also takes into account the criticisms voiced by international human rights bodies, including the Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator, with regard to relevant legislation and also new statutes on migration, such as the Illegal Migration Act, then the picture that emerges from the "foggy shores of Albion" is a most bleak one.

Mr. Chairperson,

One of the most latent forms of trafficking in human beings is trafficking for the purpose of removing human organs, cells and tissues. The activities of "black-market transplant surgeons" in places where fighting is going on in the Ukrainian conflict give cause for profound concern. The first head of the Donetsk People's Republic, Alexander Zakharchenko, had pointed out that he was in the possession of documentary evidence indicating that Ukrainian nationalists were illegally removing anatomical materials from captive members of the Donbas militia, local residents and even wounded soldiers from the Ukrainian armed forces – an activity in which they were engaged on behalf of Western entities. In July 2022, an official spokesperson for the People's Militia of the Lugansk People's Republic, Andrey Marochko, stated that he had reasonable grounds to believe that up to 30 people from the area of active hostilities ended up every day under the scalpel of "black-market transplant surgeons" operating in Ukraine. In view of this, the fact that the Kyiv regime has set up field crematoria near the combat line is most revealing. Equally telling are the major simplification of the legislation on organ transplants, including with regard to obtaining consent for the removal of organs; the fact that private clinics have been authorized to perform transplants; and the way in which transplantation has been exempted from tax liability. The Kyiv regime's arguments

1 https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/humanitarian_cooperation/1896478/?lang=en

about the complexity of organ transplants and the impossibility of performing such operations in field conditions do not stand up to scrutiny.

By the way, during the military conflict in the former Yugoslavia, transplant operations were performed on Albanian territory, not far from the town of Burrel, and evidence of these was subsequently presented to the public. These facts were described in, *inter alia*, a report for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe by Dick Marty, a representative of Switzerland, whereupon the members of the Assembly concurred that it was necessary to bring to justice those involved in selling organs.

Mr. Chairperson,

The information we have cited confirms the relevance of the problem of trafficking in human beings in the OSCE area. In that regard, it is necessary for the Secretary General and the OSCE Chairmanship of North Macedonia to expedite the appointment of a new Special Representative and Co-ordinator in line with the established procedures. We trust that the process will be transparent and understandable to the participating States.

In order to counter trafficking in human beings effectively, it is important to increase efforts to enhance national legislation and law enforcement practices. It is essential to create social and economic conditions that prevent the emergence of trafficking. Particular attention should be paid to the tools used by criminals on the Internet, not to mention the need to eliminate the demand for various forms of human exploitation. We believe that the fight against trafficking can be made more effective through collective efforts by the international community, including within the framework of relevant international organizations.

Thank you for your attention.