

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council N° 1183
Vienna, 26 April 2018**

**Statement on Human rights violations and abuses against
LGBTI persons in Chechnya – 1 Year After**

Mr. Chairperson, over the past year, 40 participating States, including the European Union, have, on numerous occasions, raised their concerns in the Permanent Council about reports of arrests, unlawful or arbitrary detention, torture, and killings of people in Chechnya based on their actual or alleged sexual orientation.

Multiple times over the past year, we have called on the Russian Federation to put an end to these violent acts, protect the victims and ensure the safety of all individuals without discrimination. We have repeatedly called on the Russian Federation to conduct prompt, effective and thorough investigations into all reports of such acts, in order to ensure that anyone responsible or complicit is brought to justice. Furthermore, we have invited the Russian Federation to keep this Council informed of the status of any investigations, regional or federal.

Over the past year, the various replies provided by the Russian delegation to the Permanent Council have been unsatisfactory. The Russian delegation has denied credible reports from international organisations, journalists and civil society, telling us to “get our facts straight” and accusing us of spreading fake news from the Internet.

Even when a brave victim, Maxim Lapunov, came forward to publicly share his account of torture and ill-treatment by Chechen security officials, the Russian Federation attempted to deflect attention from his case by raising other issues, including a lecture on supposed “cultural norms and traditions” in Chechnya.

Consequently, one year later, we continue to be deeply concerned that the investigations into these crimes, including the efforts of the Russian High Commissioner for Human Rights, Tatyana Moskalkova, appear to have stalled completely. To our knowledge, no criminal cases have been opened; no Russian

officials have publicly acknowledged the violence in Chechnya; and no Russian officials have condemned the hateful statements by Chechen officials condoning violence against LGBTI persons. We are worried that the lack of action by the authorities contributes to a climate of impunity in Russia.

Within this context, we once again repeat our questions to the Russian Federation:

- Is there an ongoing federal-level investigation into these reports? If so, when do you anticipate the investigation to conclude? And will the results be made public?
- Is the Russian Federation bringing criminal charges in Mr. Lapunov's case, and will the federal government provide protection for him and any other victims who may come forward?

The European Union and all the States aligning with the statement reaffirm their resolute commitment to combat all forms of discrimination all over the world, including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. These serious human rights violations in Chechnya remain an ongoing and grave concern. We will continue to raise our concerns and expect a substantive response from the Russian Federation. Thank you.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, GEORGIA, SAN MARINO, AUSTRALIA, CANADA and the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.