

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/280/19
15 March 2019

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1220th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 March 2019

On the continuing glorification of Nazism in Latvia

Mr. Chairperson,

For years we have been compelled to raise the issue of the glorification of the Nazis and their accomplices in Latvia, which is justification in this country for extreme forms of hate crimes.

An annual procession in honour of the Latvian Waffen-SS legionnaires has again been planned in Riga for two days' time (16 March). It is conducted by the Limbaži branch of the Daugavas Vanagi (Daugava Hawks) organization. We recall that the founders of the Daugavas Vanagi were former Latvian SS legionnaires. A meeting of the nationalist Society in Support of National Warriors is intended to take place at the monument on Freedom Square on the same day.

Such marches have unfortunately become commonplace in Latvia. Neo-Nazi processions take place despite protests from human rights defenders, anti-fascist organizations and the public. In attempting to portray the participants in these events as "defenders of freedom" and "victims of the tragedy" that befell the Latvian people, the Latvian authorities are merely encouraging the growth of neo-Nazism in the country and the strengthening of ultra-radical movements. In the Latvian Parliament (*Saeima*), attempts to establish in legislation 16 March as the official day of remembrance of the Latvian legionnaires are continuing.

Those who, in the ranks of the Latvian Volunteer Legion of the SS, committed mass crimes against humanity on the territory of Russia, Belorussia and Poland and were involved in large-scale punitive actions against hundreds of thousands of civilians and in the crimes of the Holocaust are being intentionally rehabilitated and glorified.

Let me remind you that the Latvian Legion of the SS was created in Latvia from two grenadier divisions under the command of the Nazis during the Second World War and totalled around 150,000 people. We have already distributed information in the OSCE about this criminal group. I might add that, until 1950, the former fighters of the Legion, as allies of

the Nazis, were denied entry to the United States of America as refugees. The ban was lifted during the McCarthy era for well-known political reasons.

We have repeatedly called for greater attention to be paid to what is happening in Latvia and for condemnation of the shameful events held there. Each year, the United Nations General Assembly adopts a resolution on combating glorification of Nazism, supported by the vast majority of States. We recently commemorated the victims of the Holocaust here.

In this regard, the lack of an adequate response by the European Union to the policies of the Latvian authorities, who openly condone the glorification of the Nazis and their accomplices, is surprising.

We call on the Government of Latvia to stop pandering to neo-Nazis and holding these processions, which are shameful for modern Europe, and on the OSCE Chairmanship, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to give an objective assessment of what is happening in the country.

We hope that the Latvian authorities find the political courage to prevent the neo-Nazi gatherings on 16 March, as well as on other days. Otherwise, there are serious doubts that Latvia, as stated in its constitution, is a democratic and socially responsible State governed by the rule of law, which also claims to be an equal part of the international community and to promote the sustainable and democratic development of a united Europe and world.

Thank you for your attention.