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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 March 2010

**Regarding the march of former *Waffen SS* legionnaires in Riga**

Mr. Chairman,

We are compelled to draw the Council's attention to the latest scandalous incident testifying to the attempts to rewrite European history by glorifying and justifying the crimes of Nazi criminals convicted by the Nuremberg Tribunal.

On 16 March, the latest procession of former Latvian *Waffen SS* legionnaires and their supporters from radical youth organizations took place in the centre of Riga. According to journalists, around 500 persons participated in the march (I might add that there were half as many participants last year). Official sources claim that the march was legal – the day before the Administrative Court lifted the ban by the city mayor on all events on the streets of Riga, citing “insufficient information” regarding a possible threat to security and public order. At the same time, the police took unprecedented measures to neutralize any anti-fascist demonstrations. In particular, there were cases of checks being made on representatives of the Latvian Anti-Fascist Committee and some members were arrested. A day earlier Mark Siryk, a member of the Nashi movement, was taken into custody in Riga.

On the eve of the procession the President of the Republic of Latvia, Valdis Zatlers, spoke out against the ban, saying that the march was dedicated to the memory of fallen soldiers, and that the State should ensure that the right to freedom of assembly was exercised. In talks with the mayor of Riga, Nils Ušakovs, about the possibility that the march might result in disturbances, the Minister of the Interior, Linda Murniece, stated the following: “9 May poses a much greater threat to public security and the mayor should give thought to this ahead of time”. Also noteworthy were her comments with respect to the Administrative Court's decision – this decision is nothing short of historic and leads us to hope that the date of 16 March will no longer involve such a sizeable police presence.

We firmly believe that events of this kind have no place in the centre of the Latvian capital; they are a discredit to modern-day Europe and deserve condemnation.

It is our hope that the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the European Union, all of which declare their commitment to the fight against neo-fascism, xenophobia and racism, will not stand on the sidelines and will, at last, provide an objective assessment of the annual rallies in Riga. This kind of parade should not be described as anything less than a desecration of the memory of the tens of millions of peaceful citizens who were tormented and burned alive in the ovens of the fascist concentration camps, and the millions who died on the battlefields in order to liberate the peoples of Europe from the “brown plague”.

It would be interesting to hear the response of the three personal representatives of the Chairman-in-Office of our Organization on this event, in particular, the views of Rabbi Andrew Baker, the Personal Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism. After all, it is no secret that the Latvian *Waffen SS* legionnaires were guilty, among other things, of the deaths of thousands of innocent Jews who were living in that Baltic country prior to the Second World War.

The procession of followers of Nazism has further strengthened our view that the problem of countering manifestations of fascism and neo-fascism needs to be given priority attention within the OSCE’s human dimension.

Thank you for your attention.