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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1376th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

2 June 2022

**On the violations by a number of Western participating States of the OSCE
commitments in the field of cultural and historical heritage**

Mr. Chairperson,

The Russophobia being fomented by a number of Western OSCE participating States has a multitude of ugly manifestations. One of them is the “war” unleashed on Soviet monuments and memorials. Such actions are incompatible with the provisions of the CSCE/OSCE commitments on the protection of cultural rights. For example, the commitments under the 1991 Document of the Cracow Symposium on the Cultural Heritage of the CSCE Participating States. Paragraph 12 emphasizes that “[t]he complete and lasting documentation of sites, structures, cultural landscapes, objects and cultural systems, including historical, religious and cultural monuments, as they presently exist, is one of the most important legacies to the cultural heritage that can be provided for future generations.”

Acts of violence against Soviet monuments are occurring in countries that declared their commitment to European democratic values when they acceded to the European Union. All the same, today many of them are supporting neo-Nazism in Ukraine, elevating those who fought on the side of Hitler’s Germany to the rank of national heroes and violating the rights of national minorities.

Here are a few examples. Around twenty such episodes have occurred in Bulgaria since February 2022. In Sofia offensive graffiti was daubed on the monument to the Soviet Army, a group of figures at the common grave of Soviet soldiers and the memorial to the Bulgarian anti-fascists on several occasions. The monument to the Soviet soldier in Plovdiv was desecrated. Things got to the point where, on 9 May, vandals used a drone to pour blue and yellow paint over the monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia.¹

It can clearly be seen from the example of Latvia how the European Union and international human rights bodies, including the OSCE, are turning a blind eye to manifestations of hate speech. Jānis Iesalnieks, a member of the Saeima (Latvian Parliament) from the National Alliance parliamentary majority party, has

¹ In addition, the memorial at the common grave of Soviet soldiers in the city of Dobrich has been vandalized twice. Ceramic portraits on the monument to naval officers in the town of Pomorie have been smashed. Paint has been poured over the monument to the Soviet soldier in Radomir. Wreaths at the common grave in the town of Pernik have been burned. The slab affixed to the monument to Marshal Zhukov in the small town of Strelcha has been damaged.

divided the country's population into Latvians and "occupiers", between whom there is still "no end to the hatred". He also dreams that his children will "live in a Latvia where 95 per cent of the population will be Latvians" and there will be no more "occupation monuments". This hateful call for a radical reduction in the size of the Russian-speaking population has not received any assessment on the part of the international human rights community.

The Latvian authorities are openly supporting neo-Nazism in Ukraine. Hence the unruly behaviour of the followers of those who sided with Hitler's Germany during the Second World War. Over the past three months, nine monuments have been desecrated and five Soviet memorials illegally dismantled in Latvia.

An unacceptable situation has developed around the monument to the liberating soldiers in Riga. The authorities have approved a draft law that would put an end to the relevant article of the Latvian-Russian Treaty on the Preservation of Memorial Structures, including the monument in question. On 25 May, the vice mayor of Riga, Vilnis Ķirsis, announced that the Riga City Council was considering all options for the monument's demolition, including blowing it up. The next day, on 26 May, the Saeima supported at its first reading a draft law obliging municipal authorities to dismantle Soviet monuments, including the one to the liberators of Riga, by 15 November.

At the same time, the Latvian Government has zealously defended the preservation of the Latvian Beehive for Freedom monument in the Belgian municipality of Zedelgem. Let us remember that this monument was dedicated to Latvian Nazi prisoners of war. This memorial was justifiably controversial in Belgium because the Latvian Legion was structurally part of the Waffen SS.

Lithuania and Estonia have also lent themselves to the West's strategy of rewriting history, altering public consciousness and destroying symbols of the past. Between 25 February and 30 May, more than 15 memorials were damaged in Lithuania, often involving the daubing of swastikas. In Estonia, on 7 May, vandals desecrated the Soviet war memorial in the city of Tartu, covering it with swastikas and obscenities in English.

Things are dreadful in Poland in this regard, where acts of vandalism against Soviet memorials are regularly recorded. Historical remembrance sites, including Soviet-Polish ones, are being artificially subsumed under the policy of decommunization. Of the 561 memorial sites included in the "List of memorials to the Soviet defenders of the Fatherland who fell on the territory of Poland", around one hundred have been preserved to date.

Moreover, since February, vandals have damaged monuments in the city of Gdańsk, and also in Działdowo and Chrzowice. Three monuments to Soviet soldiers were demolished in Siedlce (Greater Poland Voivodeship), Międzybłocie (Greater Poland Voivodeship) and Garncarsko (Lower Silesian Voivodeship).

On 13 May, vandals painted a Nazi Wolfsangel (Wolf's Hook) symbol on the monument to Soviet soldiers in the town of Piešťany in Slovakia. We would remind you that this "symbol" was once used by SS members of the Second Panzer Division "Das Reich" and the Dutch 34th Volunteer Grenadier Division "Landstorm Nederland". Nowadays, this sign is the calling card of the Ukrainian neo-Nazi Azov battalion, which is guilty of numerous crimes against the civilian population in Donbas.

Just over ten days later – on 25 May – this "symbol" appeared on the wall at the memorial to Soviet soldiers in Vienna (Austria). We have repeatedly warned the Austrian authorities about the consequences of their silently pandering to Ukrainian nationalists and their henchmen. And this disgraceful act is further confirmation of that.

In Switzerland, the famous Suvorov Cross, dedicated to the Russian commander's crossing of the St. Gotthard Pass in the Swiss Alps, has been repeatedly vandalized. It is particularly disturbing to observe what is happening in Germany. Since February, vandals have desecrated the memorial to Soviet soldiers in Berlin's Treptow Park on three occasions. On 21 April, paint was poured over the base of the memorial obelisk in the war cemetery in Potsdam.

Let me turn to a few of the most recent examples of lawlessness in Ukraine. There, under the external direction of Western countries, memorials and cultural sites are being destroyed on a daily basis. Work has started in Brovary, near Kyiv, to dismantle the Soviet-era vehicles in Victory Park. They are going to demolish the memorial commemorating the 30th anniversary of the city's liberation from the fascist invaders. In May alone, unknown persons poured red paint over the monument to Russian commander Alexander Suvorov in Izmail (Odessa region) on two separate occasions. In Korosten, in the Zhytomyr region, Soviet monuments and a memorial plaque were dismantled. In Zhytomyr, a Soviet tank erected as a monument on Victory Square was removed from its pedestal. The same thing happened in the cities of Rivne, Storozhynets, Volodymyr-Volynskyi and Mukachevo, among other places. A complete eradication of the "Russian world" is planned in Zaporizhzhia. The destruction of a memorial in Odessa to the city's defenders against Nazism in 1941 was the height of cynicism.²

Mr. Chairperson,

The "war on monuments" is not only a violation of the commitments to preserve historical and cultural heritage. It is a manifestation of a systematic policy of falsifying and distorting history and reinterpreting the outcome of the Second World War. Not to mention the belittling and even misrepresentation of the role and place of the USSR in the victory over Nazism and fascism.

We have cited just a few of the most recent examples. There is no reason to doubt their Russophobic overtones. Those who today advocate the removal of Soviet war memorial sites from "public space" would like to erase from history their ignominious past, when most of the countries of continental Europe submitted to Hitler almost without resistance, and some even actively assisted him in his criminal schemes.

Thank you for your attention.

2 In Kharkiv, a bust of the distinguished military leader of the victory over Nazism, Marshal Georgy Zhukov, was savagely demolished with the aid of a dumper truck. In Dnipropetrovsk, a stele with four stars dedicated to him as a Hero of the Soviet Union was dismantled. Similarly, the bust of the commander of the First Ukrainian Front and participant in the liberation of Ukraine, Nikolay Vatutin, was also destroyed with a dumper truck in the settlement of Velyki Komiatiy in the Zakarpattia region. In Rivne, a monument to Nikolay Kuznetsov, legendary among those who fought against Nazism, has been demolished, and slabs with the names of heroes of the Great Patriotic War destroyed. Nearby, in the city of Dubno, a memorial to the liberating Soviet soldiers was destroyed yesterday. In Chernivtsi the monument to the Red Army soldiers who liberated the city from the Nazis was also dismantled. The monument to a notable representative of the anti-fascist partisan movement, Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, has been destroyed in Chernihiv. In Lutsk, municipal services desecrated the Eternal Glory memorial, from which symbols of the victory over Nazism were removed. The same thing also happened in Lviv at the Hill of Glory memorial (and six months before that the municipal authorities had demolished the Victors over Nazism monument on Stryiska Street). A series of attacks by vandals were carried out in the Lviv region: the Eternal Flame memorial was dismantled in the city of Drohobych; the monument to those who fought against Nazism was demolished in the city of Stryi; in Boryslav a stele in honour of the city's liberation from the Nazi invaders was dismantled. The monument to a liberating soldier was destroyed in Kremenets in the Ternopil region. In the centre of Mukachevo in the Zakarpattia region, an obelisk of Glory in honour of the Soviet soldiers who gave their lives to liberate the region from Nazism was destroyed, with the desecration of the graves of those interred there announced by the city authorities.