

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/1211/24  
17 October 2024

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1492nd MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 October 2024

**In connection with the International Day of the Girl Child**

Mr. Chairperson,

In 2011, the United Nations General Assembly declared 11 October as the International Day of the Girl Child. That date, already highly important as it is, has taken on particular relevance in the present-day context of complete politicization of the protection of children's rights and in view of the application of double standards to that topic.

Over many years, the members of the Kyiv regime failed to evacuate children from danger zones, where fighting was taking place and where girls and boys acted as human shields for the Ukrainian military and neo-Nazi forces. Turning a blind eye to the atrocities committed by the Ukrainian armed formations in relation to civilian objects and the civilian population, the international human rights community and the Kyiv regime's Western handlers displayed utter indifference towards the protection of human rights, not least those of minors.

Moreover, since the Russian special military operation was launched, a disinformation campaign, unprecedented in its scale, has been going on against Russia, where it is alleged that real protection of children and assistance for their families have no place. The relaying of propagandistic fables by the Kyiv regime and its Western handlers is not conducive to respect for the rights of minors. On the contrary, these machinations go against their interests. As glaring examples of such subversive activity we may cite the work of some Ukrainian non-governmental organizations, such as Save Ukraine, or the "information" on Ukrainian children available on the [childrenofwar.gov.ua](http://childrenofwar.gov.ua) website. The Office of the Russian Federation Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights has taken a close look at the data published there. As a result of that check, numerous discrepancies, obsolete information and downright lies have been identified. One can hardly lend credence to that website's reference to 19,000 girls and boys forcibly transferred to Russia.

Since February 2022, our country has taken in around 4.8 million inhabitants of Ukraine and the Donbass republics, of whom more than 700,000 are children. The overwhelming majority of these minors have come to safe regions of Russia together with their parents or close relatives. Children's care institutions in Donbass moved out under shelling fire in order to keep their young charges safe. Relevant Russian

agencies, above all the Commissioner for Children's Rights, are carrying out meticulous work based on protecting the best interests of children and families, on operational responsiveness and transparency. They are helping to ensure the safety of children in combat zones, to enable them to realize their rights to education, humanitarian and medical aid, and much more besides. With the assistance of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Qatar and the Vatican, systematic and transparent action is being taken to reunite separated families. The assertions about Russia having special programmes of some kind in place for the forced adoption of children from the zone of the special military operation, about thousands of children allegedly already having been adopted and about their being forced to change their nationality – these are downright fake stories. We call upon all those who genuinely wish to get a real and objective sense of our country's actions to familiarize themselves with the Bulletin on the Protection of Children's Rights prepared by the Russian Commissioner for Children's Rights. We have been circulating that document at the OSCE.

Mr. Chairperson,

Racism, racial discrimination and intolerance in various spheres of life, unfortunately, impact most on children. Structural racism manifests itself particularly clearly in the field of education, where the victims of intolerance are often migrant and refugee children as well as minors of African or Asian descent. In the concluding observations published in late August this year that the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination adopted after considering the combined reports of the United Kingdom, the Committee's experts arrived at rather pessimistic conclusions. They expressed their concern about "the persistence of ethnic disparities in education, in particular low educational attainment, high exclusion records and high exposure to racially motivated bullying and prejudicial treatment, which disproportionately affect pupils belonging to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and pupils of African descent". In that regard, the United Kingdom was recommended to "increase efforts to eliminate racial discrimination and racist bullying in schools and adopt adequate measures, including awareness-raising on the harmful effects of bullying", and to "strengthen its measures to ensure the availability, accessibility and quality of education for children belonging to ethnic minority groups".

Another form of racism, namely Russophobia, also continues to gather strength in certain OSCE participating States, specifically taking the form of discrimination against girls and boys from the Russian and Russian-speaking population in the Baltic countries. The new law on national minorities being discussed in Lithuania – in accordance with which only those speaking the languages of EU Member States are to have the right to develop their culture, traditions, customs and language, to join organizations and parties, to have their own media and to impart information in their own language – flagrantly violates the rights of the Russian and Russian-speaking population. The number of schools there offering instruction in Russian is being reduced at the same time as the number of subjects taught in Lithuanian is being increased. In the years that have passed since that country gained independence, the number of Russian schools has shrunk from 85 to 26. Our compatriots are denied the opportunity to receive fully fledged higher education in their native language.

In Latvia, too, Russian and Russian-speaking minors cannot count on being taught in their native tongue. The Russian language has pretty much completely been squeezed out of public life, including the education system. At the instigation of the official authorities, Russophobia and discrimination in daily life are being ramped up; children are harassed in schools and even in kindergartens. Something similar is also happening in Estonia, where, as in the case of Latvia, the shameful phenomenon of mass statelessness persists, and where the Estonianization of Russian schools and kindergartens is gaining momentum, while Russian-speaking inhabitants are systematically subjected to discrimination.

Mr. Chairperson,

Nor can we ignore the problem of violations of the rights of Indigenous people, including children. In early October this year, the experts of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted that Finland had “violated the rights of Sámi Indigenous people to culture and land, by granting mineral exploration permits on their territory without an impact assessment or an adequate participation process”. They reached this bleak conclusion after reviewing complaints filed by members of the Kova-Labba Siida, a semi-nomadic Sami community, including three children, in connection with mineral extraction projects on their traditional territory. The experts also noted that the granting of the permits in question had led, among other things, to a violation of children’s cultural rights. In that regard, we should like to draw attention to a report published on the website of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that deals with the situation regarding Indigenous peoples, including in Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the United States of America. All of these countries have pursued, in some form or another, assimilationist and discriminatory policies in relation to the Indigenous population, including minors. This continues to give rise to a great many problems of a social, political and cultural nature. We call upon the participating States, and likewise upon the relevant OSCE executive structures, above all the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, to study that comprehensive review.

Mr. Chairperson,

The examples we have cited of violations of the rights of girls and boys attest to deep-seated problems in this field, not least within the OSCE’s area of responsibility. We call upon the countries named by us to stop engaging in myth-making, to start respecting children’s rights in their own backyard and to refrain from applying double standards in this sensitive domain.

Thank you for your attention.