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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
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AT THE 982nd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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**Regarding International Holocaust Memorial Day and the
70th anniversary of the end of the siege of Leningrad**

On 27 January, society marked two anniversaries related to tragic episodes in the history of the Second World War. The criminal ideology of Nazism, aimed at eradicating entire peoples and social groups, left terrible marks on the history of the twentieth century. Millions of lost lives and broken existences unite two tragedies: the Holocaust and the siege of Leningrad. It is deeply symbolic that the 70th anniversary of the end of the siege of Leningrad, which claimed around a million innocent lives, and International Holocaust Memorial Day, commemorating an event which killed six million Jews, are marked on the same date.

Hitler's decision to wipe Leningrad off the face of the Earth within two months came up against vehement resistance. For almost 900 days the residents of Leningrad fought for their freedom and their right to exist. When the siege started, there was enough food in the city for around one and a half months. Only three per cent of residents were killed by bombardment and artillery fire. The remainder, slightly fewer than a million people, died of hunger. Terrible photographs of those whom it was possible to save and carry across the so-called "road of life", an ice bridge across the Ladoga, can only be compared with the prisoners of Auschwitz and other Nazi concentration camps.

Paying tribute to the victims of the siege of Leningrad and the Holocaust, today we must unite our efforts in order to prevent the re-emergence of such radical hate movements.

In our country there is deep respect for the memory of all victims of the Great Patriotic War, and comprehensive support is provided to veterans, prisoners of concentration camps and of ghettos, survivors of the siege and war workers on the home front. Under Russian law they have the highest level of social protection.

In many OSCE countries, veterans of the Second World War are given the respect they deserve, and support is provided to victims of the Holocaust and other victims of Nazism. We welcome the initiative of the European Shoah Legacy Institute to hold a conference this year on issues of social protection for victims of the Holocaust and other victims of Nazism.

Work to preserve historical truth about the Holocaust also merits great respect and support. It is carried out in Russia and in many OSCE countries. Allied troops and Soviet soldiers who sacrificed their lives to save not only Jews, but also many other groups, from total destruction deserve the same treatment.

The tragedy of the Second World War should serve as an important lesson to us. We cannot allow our moral compass to drift, and we cannot permit attempts to whitewash Nazism and once again promote the theories of racial purity and supremacy. No personal memories of history or of historical insult can serve as justification for the crimes of the SS and attempts to give victims and executioners, liberators and occupiers equal rights. It is unacceptable to have a situation where, in certain European Union countries, journalists are prosecuted for libel after describing Nazi collaborators who personally participated in the eradication of the Jews as “executioners of the Holocaust”.

The creation of the alliance against Hitler was an unprecedented example of States with different ideologies and political systems uniting in the face of a mortal threat to humanity. There is no doubt that today, too, the same will in combating new challenges and threats to European security should unite all OSCE participating States.