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**RIGHT OF REPLY BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1497th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

21 November 2024

In response to the statement by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta, Mr. Christopher Cutajar

Madam Chairperson,

I shall exercise my right of reply. In his statement today, Mr. Christopher Cutajar was overflowing with symbolism; he referred to the milestone of 1,000 days since the launch of the Russian special military operation.

We must observe straight away that we cannot take seriously a logic based on fragmented thinking, on giving an account of a particular phenomenon taking as the starting point a certain date that suits our opponents. They studiously ignore the root causes of the current crisis, seeking to portray its consequences as if these were the root causes.

Mr. Cutajar preferred not to go into details about the 2,676 days of the conflict in Donbass that preceded the start of the Russian special military operation. Or about the fact that today marks exactly 3,633 days since the bloody coup d'état of 22 February 2014 in Kyiv, which was orchestrated, financed and organized from abroad.

We would remind you that it was following that coup that the active militarization of Ukraine and the military development of its territory by NATO countries commenced, the aim being to pose threats to the security of Russia and its allies. The territory of Ukraine began to be used as a bridgehead to project tensions. Human rights, international law and international humanitarian law would come to be violated without any inhibitions.

Mr. Cutajar passed over in silence the Kyiv regime's attempts to forcibly change the identity of a majority of the inhabitants of Ukraine, to prohibit everything Russian – starting with education and ending with the conduct of business in the service sector. He drew a veil over the surge in the number of paramilitary neo-Nazi groups, their nexus with the regime's intelligence services, the fact that fighters from neo-Nazi battalions with a "track record" of crimes and the blood of Donbass civilians on their hands were officially incorporated into structures of the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2016.

Mr. Cutajar showed no interest in the way religious freedoms have been trodden underfoot and unprecedented pressure has been exerted on the clergy and parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. He ignored the imposition of media censorship, the killing of journalists in Ukraine. He said not one word about the physical liquidation of the Kyiv regime's political opponents. Maybe this is all par for the course in the so-called "rules-based world order", but we think it is still worth mentioning. Otherwise the picture that emerges is incomplete.

Before the Russian special military operation was launched, the Kyiv regime's aggressive actions in Donbass (a so-called "anti-terrorist operation" was unleashed on 7 April 2014) had claimed the lives of at least 3,500 civilians. Around 70 per cent of those fatalities occurred in the People's Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk – data taken from the defunct OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, so beloved of many in this room.

On 24 February 2022, Russia came to the defence of the residents of Donbass, who were being subjected to daily shelling. The special operation to demilitarize and denazify Ukraine is meant to degrade the Kyiv regime's combat capabilities, to make it impossible for these to be used against civilians.

Against this backdrop, starting off with the shipment of anti-tank missile systems and man-portable air defence systems for the Ukrainian armed forces, the Kyiv regime's sponsors have time and again kept raising the level of armed escalation – putting into the field heavy artillery, long-range multiple-launch rocket systems, unmanned combat aerial vehicles, uncrewed boats, tanks and combat aircraft. There is growing speculation about the provision of long-range missiles for strikes deep into Russian territory. To say nothing of the direct involvement of NATO military personnel in training and commanding Volodymyr Zelenskyy's armed formations, in planning and organizing sabotage operations against the civilian population in Russian regions, in encouraging attacks on Russian population centres, in furnishing intelligence for these ends, and so on.

The egregious violations of international humanitarian law by the Kyiv regime's formations and foreign mercenaries continue today to be hushed up by the OSCE leadership out of political considerations. Instead of looking things in the eye, the Maltese Chairmanship is unashamedly breaching its mandate, including in the Permanent Council, by reproducing groundless accusations and politicized propaganda aimed against Russia.

It is precisely in this vein that the joint statement of 19 November 2024 by the OSCE Chairmanship Troika was composed, that is, in a one-sided, biased and, truth be told, politically tawdry manner. Not only does it not mention the tragic fate of the Kyiv regime's victims, but it even makes the Kyiv regime itself out to be some kind of "martyr". That joint statement is a glaring specimen of irresponsible and prejudiced rhetoric that completely ignores the root causes of the crisis in Ukraine and panders to those radical members of the Western alliance who are actively trying to turn the bonfire that is the Ukrainian crisis into a conflagration, namely a continental war in Europe. The States that form part of the OSCE Chairmanship Troika have no right to come out with such confrontational assertions. It is a flagrant violation of the OSCE rules.

Similarly, today, while sitting at the head of the Permanent Council's table behind the nameplate of the Maltese OSCE Chairmanship, Mr. Cutajar disregarded the Chairmanship's responsibilities, with which they had been entrusted by all the OSCE participating States. No one gave them the right to abuse these powers and rehash politicized assessments by a group of Western countries that are directed against one OSCE participating State.

All this not only does not add to the authority of the Maltese Chairmanship, but is also creating a patently unconstructive atmosphere in the run-up to the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Malta.

Thank you for your attention.