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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 970th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 November 2013

**Regarding the Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office
for tolerance**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Baker, Mr. Akhmetov and Ms. Izhevskaya,

Over the past 20 years, dozens of commitments have been adopted within the OSCE and other international organizations on combating various forms of religious intolerance. Corresponding national legislation has been developed in many countries, and the work of law enforcement authorities stepped up. Civil society is actively involved in combating these negative phenomena.

However, there has been no radical change in the situation. It turns out that no OSCE State is immune from the rise in manifestations of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, aggressive nationalism and religious intolerance.

According to a recent survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 12 per cent of the persons questioned in Europe had been victims of racist violence and 37 per cent had been subjected to discrimination. Owing to the rise in anti-Semitism, between 40 and 50 per cent of the Jewish population of France, Belgium and Hungary are seriously considering emigration.

The fact that not only religious minorities but even those in the majority are demanding protection and the safeguarding of their rights sets alarm bells ringing. Unfortunately, intolerance towards Christians and defilement of Christian places of worship also occurs in Western Europe, including in places with a predominantly Christian population.

The situation of Christians in a number of OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation is cause for serious concern. As the discussions at the recent OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Monaco have shown, the growth of migration flows, including refugees fleeing for their lives from growing religious extremism, is becoming a serious problem for European countries. Evidently, they were not prepared for these consequences of the complex events that have taken place in the Middle East and North Africa.

The rise in Islamophobia, which even prosperous European countries cannot cope with, is very worrying. Continuing attempts to associate manifestations of violent extremism and terrorism with a particular religion are unacceptable.

The rise in radical trends and political movements supported by certain segments of the population is cause for particular concern. The entry into parliaments of parties pushing nationalistic and sometimes even neo-Nazi ideology, neo-Nazi demonstrations and rallies, and the glorification of Waffen-SS legionnaires and their henchmen evoke painful associations with the 1930s. We remember only too well what global tragedy the international community's failure to react and lack of concern led to back then.

Civil society representatives have been trying to draw the OSCE's attention to the threat posed by resurgent Nazi ideology for many years now. All of us must finally acknowledge the unacceptability of justifying the acts of neo-Nazis by their right to freedom of assembly and association, and join forces to foster a rejection within society of extreme right-wing views and ideologies.

We call on the participating States not only to roundly condemn and carefully investigate all such cases, but also to make more active use of the opportunities provided by the OSCE to combat these dangerous tendencies. The Russian authorities are pursuing such a policy in our country and are ready to work in an international context, including the sharing of experience in countering these threats.

In conclusion, we should like to wish the Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office success in their important work.

Thank you for your attention.