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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1026th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

20 November 2014

**On pressure in the United Kingdom on the
Russia Today television channel**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are extremely concerned about the pressure being exerted on the Russian news channel Russia Today, which broadcasts in the United Kingdom, by the British media watchdog Ofcom (Office of Communication).

This body has stated that the reports by Russia Today on the situation in Ukraine are biased. It has issued several warnings, the most recent on 11 November, and threatened to withdraw Russia Today's broadcasting licence if the editorial board fails to take account of its remarks. According to the British censors, Russia Today presents information from a Russian angle whereas, it says, all news should be presented "impartially". What they mean by "impartial" the British censors do not explain.

For its part, the management of Russia Today called on the British experts to adopt the same approach with all television and radio companies. It was even willing to provide numerous examples of biased reporting on the situation in Ukraine by the British television channel BBC. Ofcom replied that it accepted complaints about any channel except the BBC. In other words, the BBC is sacrosanct.

The accusation of biased reporting by one channel while completely ignoring claims that another was doing the same can only be described as politically motivated censorship. The British regulator does not even hide the fact that it is trying to force Russia Today to change its editorial policy, even though this channel is practically the only source of alternative information in the United Kingdom about the situation in Ukraine.

It should be recalled that in 2013 Russia Today was the third most popular channel in the United Kingdom after the BBC and Sky News. In the same year it was awarded the title news channel of the year at the television festival in Monte Carlo. Russia Today's live broadcasts from the Maidan in Kyiv received a special commendation from the British Association for International Broadcasting.

In other words, on the one hand the British watchdog assiduously filters information, labelling any point of view other than the official one as “propaganda”. On the other hand, the very same country is co-sponsoring a draft decision at the Ministerial Council meeting in Basel on freedom of expression, which in effect claims that freedom of speech and access to information are completely untouchable.

Allow me to cite just a couple of extracts from this draft decision:

- “Fully implement OSCE and other international commitments by respecting, promoting and protecting the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom **to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds**” (paragraph 1);
- “Respect freedom of expression in the media, **in particular the editorial independence of the media**” (paragraph 4).

No further comment is necessary.

Our colleagues don’t like it when we use the term “double standards”. Nonetheless, in everyday practice they are often happy to resort to them, especially when other countries are involved.

We call on the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to pay attention to this violation of the rights of citizens to free access to information and of freedom of the media.

Thank you for your attention.