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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1375th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 May 2022

**On the ongoing gross violations of the rights of the Russian and Russian-speaking
population by some Western OSCE participating States**

Mr. Chairperson,

The dire problem of discrimination against the Russian and Russian-speaking population and pandering to Russophobia by a number of Western OSCE participating States has lost none of its relevance. It is often accompanied by the invocation of some sort of solidarity with Ukraine as a pretext, but in practice certain Member States of the European Union are simply trying to get into the good books of the EU bloc through their transgressions.

We have already spoken on more than one occasion about what is happening in this regard in Poland, the country chairing our Organization. In a State that proclaims its allegiance to common European values, hate-inciting statements are encouraged and elevated to the status of national policy. Gatherings of aggressive Ukrainian hooligans are referred to as “peaceful assemblies”. Monuments to Soviet soldiers are being demolished on a massive scale, Russian media are being banned. The list of Russophobic manifestations, alas, keeps on growing literally with every day.

Latvia has “distinguished” itself by yet another revealing anti-Russian campaign. The political repression organized by the Latvian Government against the Latvian Russian Union party is categorically unacceptable and grossly contravenes the international obligations of that country. It is quite clear that the reason why the Latvian Russian Union is unwelcome to the current nationalist regime is its unyielding stance, maintained over many years, on defending the identity and interests of the Russian-speaking population. This association is “guilty” of actively opposing the Latvian authorities’ attempts to insult the memory of people’s ancestors and to destroy the Soviet past.

The independence of the initiative by a certain activist to canvass support for the disbanding of the Latvian Russian Union does not stand up to scrutiny. The arguments cited, including “eliminating a means whereby Vladimir Putin’s bloodthirsty regime can exercise influence over Latvia” and destroying the “cult” of Victory Day, are puzzling for any right-minded person.

It is evident that the Latvian authorities are polarizing the country into two hostile linguistic and ideological camps. The next step will be to ostracize those who seek to preserve their identity. This is, in particular, what is being pursued through the amendments to Article 7 of the Political Parties Act proposed on 15 May by the ultra-right National Bloc. They would allow the authorities to disband or restrict the activities of parties on account of their “incompatibility with democracy”, as they see fit.

These actions by the Latvian Government contravene the democratic principles of political pluralism and the right to freedom of expression proclaimed by the European Union. Moreover, what is happening not only in Latvia but also in the other Baltic countries is further proof of the destructive and extremely dangerous processes involved in an all-out war on dissent.

In addition, it is particularly alarming that the intelligence services are being used ever more actively as a resource against political figures and human rights defenders, which is in effect leading to a flourishing of McCarthyism in Latvia, to the establishment of a “dictatorship of democracy” and to the hounding of the country’s own citizens on trumped-up charges. This transformation into repressive police States would not be possible without the approval and patronage of the EU bloc and the US Government. Political surveillance and persecution of dissent are being fostered and promoted in European countries in the twenty-first century. Numerous instances of human rights violations are hushed up or simply disregarded.

We call on the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Kairat Abdrakhmanov, to react to and give a principled assessment of, in accordance with his mandate, the multifarious discrimination against the Russian-speaking population of Latvia, where it has been elevated to the rank of State policy.

Mr. Chairperson,

Russian cultural figures continue to be discriminated against in Western OSCE participating States. Three Russian female violinists have been barred from participating in a music festival that is scheduled to take place in the Italian town of Gorizia in September. In a letter that they received from the organizers it is hypocritically asserted that this step was not motivated by any discrimination whatsoever. The mayor of Gorizia, Rodolfo Ziberna, condemned this decision by the organizers of the competition, describing it as “an incomprehensible and unacceptable choice that goes against the very spirit of the event”.

The General Director of the Bavarian State Opera, Serge Dorny, proudly admitted that he was the first among his peers to suspend staff of Russian origin for political reasons. He also considers that people should be “divided into different categories”. The consequences of this type of segregation are well known to students of history.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the overwhelming majority of OSCE participating States with a multilingual population the use and preservation of native languages are taken for granted. It would be difficult to imagine the reaction to any restrictions on the linguistic rights of the population of, say, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland or Finland. In this regard, it is legitimate to ask why the processes of forced Ukrainization and eradication of the Russian language that have been under way in Ukraine since February 2014 have not only not elicited a proper response from the international human rights community, including the OSCE, but have been encouraged in every possible way by the Western handlers of the Ukrainian Government.

Incidentally, the Ukrainian authorities’ discriminatory attitude towards the Russian-speaking population has been noted even by Western journalists. For example, a number of pieces appeared in the Italian press a few days ago. Yet the OSCE remains silent. We have already spoken today about the utterly

unacceptable approach to this matter taken by, say, the Office of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine over many years. The discrimination against the Russian-speaking population and rampant Russophobia were disregarded even at the OSCE's largest field operation, the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, which, admittedly, no longer exists. Where are the practical results of the OSCE executive structures' "silent diplomacy"?

A brutal linguistic and cultural purge is currently ongoing in Ukraine. The struggle that is under way is by no means one for the future of Ukraine: it is a struggle against the past, an attempt to correct and even distort the cultural references of the inhabitants of this country made up of various nationalities, to erase whole pages of its history, to substitute myths for actual facts. As a result, a merciless war is being waged even against monuments. Let us just cite the most recent examples. A monument to the great Russian poet Alexander Pushkin was recently dismantled in the city of Mykolaiv, while the same fate befell a monument to Grand Prince Alexander Nevsky in Kharkiv. And there are many, many others: we have already mentioned scores of such incidents in which Ukrainian nationalists, acting with the authorities' consent and even support, meted out barbaric treatment to the country's historical heritage. As the mayor of Lviv, Mr. Andrii Sadovyi, stated a few days ago: "Our Russophobia is still not enough." Meanwhile, the Director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, Mr. Anton Drobovych, feels that de-Russification is a natural process in Ukraine and that in the future it will need to be regulated additionally through legislation.

Mr. Chairperson,

We demand that the discrimination against the Russian and Russian-speaking population by Western countries and their stooges be stopped. Russia will continue to strive to defend these people's rights, no matter where they live. We will carry out this work in accordance with the international conventions that have been signed by, among others, Western States.

Thank you for your attention.