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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 924th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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Regarding manifestations of neo-Nazism in the OSCE area

Mr. Chairperson,

Recent events in a number of OSCE countries highlight the relevance of stepping up efforts to combat aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism. We strongly believe that combating the various forms of racism should be one of the key priorities of the OSCE and its institutions, which unfortunately are not giving this problem the attention it deserves. In our opinion, this inexplicable omission is due in large measure to the absence in the OSCE of a long-term strategy in this area based on an in-depth analysis of the reasons for the rise and development of these dangerous trends.

Our concern is prompted by the growth of nationalistic movements in the modern world and acts of violence against people with different skin colour or confession, migrants and members of national or ethnic minorities. Unfortunately we have been increasingly frequent witnesses in recent years to organized marches by former SS members in various European Union (EU) countries and rallies by veterans of the Waffen-SS, which was condemned by the Nuremberg Tribunal. It is clear that demonstrative acts of this type and the increasingly frequent attempts to whitewash Nazism and fascism make an ideal breeding ground for the growth in the number of groups or persons advocating "racial purity" and discrimination on religious, national or ethnic grounds.

Unfortunately it is no longer possible to bring back the 77 victims of the recently convicted Anders Behring Breivik or the nine victims of the extreme right-wing terrorist cell National Socialist Underground. The investigation is continuing into the attack on the Sikh temple in Wisconsin, which cost the lives of seven innocent people. A photograph of the killer standing under a flag with a Nazi swastika circulated around the whole world.

The number of anti-Semitic incidents is growing and has long gone beyond the desecration of the graves of Holocaust victims, as illustrated by the incident on 23 August in Vilkaviškis in Lithuania. People have also been the targets of attacks. On 29 August in Michigan a 19-year-old student, Zachary Tennen, was the victim of a beating by youths yelling Nazi salutations.

While this is going on, measures to honour supporters of Nazism are taking place in some EU countries. Only this summer there were a number of events paying tribute to SS men and their supporters. On 14 July in Kuressaare, Estonia, a rally of so-called “freedom fighters” was held at which the Minister of Defence Urmas Reinsalu expressed his gratitude to Nazi henchmen for “rescuing the honour of the Estonian nation”. On 27 July a commemoration of veterans of the Estonian Waffen-SS legion Hugo Major was organized in the city of Tapa, attended by representatives of the local administration, and the next day there was the annual meeting of the “friends of the Estonian SS legion”.

A “patriotism lesson” was given at the Sovushka kindergarten in Riga on 16 March with soldiers dressed in SS legion uniforms. The most recent event of this type was the erection in the centre of Bauska of a monument, the first of its kind in the Baltic region, to members of punitive police Waffen-SS brigades, guilty of killing peaceful inhabitants of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. The inscription on it, which says “Latvia should be a Latvian State”, is also of note. The fact that the organizers invited schoolchildren to the unveiling of the monument is particularly shameless.

Private publications and companies in Estonia seem to “joke” about the memory of concentration camp victims. After the use for publicity purposes of the Auschwitz motto “Arbeit macht frei” (labour brings freedom), the idea has already been copied by one publication. It recommended to people suffering from overweight to follow the example of Buchenwald concentration camp where, according to the advertising slogan, “there was not one fat person”. Efraim Zuroff, head of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Jerusalem, described this as an attempt by a weekly news magazine of a Member State of the European Union to make light of the memory of millions of victims of Nazism.

Neo-Nazi marches and the glorification of former SS men and their supporters who exterminated millions of people on the theory of “racial superiority” is just racist propaganda and has nothing to do with freedom of assembly or speech.

We find it cynical to stifle any voices drawing attention to these manifestations – activists in Latvian non-governmental organizations (NGO) have been accused of “aggressive propaganda” – and simply to refuse entry into the national territory of citizens of other countries. The head of the Finnish NGO Finland without Fascism Petri Krohn and the Russian historians Alexander Dyukov and Vladimir Simindei are cases in point. The political scientists Modest Kolerov and Igor Pavlovsky were also recently added to list of people refused entry to Latvia.

Moreover, right-wing extremist publications and organizations continue to be “untouchable” in spite of the provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which calls on States Parties to “condemn all propaganda and all organizations which are based on ideas or theories of superiority of one race ... or which attempt to justify [it]” and to criminalize participation in such organizations or activities.

In order to prevent further tragedies there is an urgent need to take all necessary steps to expose and bring to justice those involved in racially motivated crimes. We also call on all participating States to step up their efforts to comply with their international commitments in combating intolerance and those who have not already done so to withdraw their reservations

regarding the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

It is high time that the specialist institutions within the OSCE took adequate account of activities of this type. In view of the topicality of this problem, there is an urgent need in general for the adoption of a separate decision at the Ministerial Council meeting on combating aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism. We intend to put forward a draft decision in the near future.

In conclusion, we should like to stress our openness to an exchange of experience regarding the suppression and prevention of the growth of neo-Nazism and also pledge our willingness to continue to contribute to with the OSCE's efforts to combat aggressive nationalism.

Thank you for your attention.