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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1390th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

22 September 2022

**In response to the reports by the three Personal Representatives of the
Chairperson-in-Office on tolerance**

Mr. Chairperson,

The Russian Federation has consistently supported the three Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office on combating intolerance and discrimination as institutional entities. Over many years we called for the intensity and visibility of their work to be enhanced.

We were convinced of the importance of this instrument, since in accordance with the “statutory” documents for these posts, the activities of the three Representatives are part of the overall efforts of the OSCE in “combating discrimination and promoting tolerance” and “combat[ing] hate crimes and violent manifestations of intolerance”.

However, in recent months it has been the case that the Personal Representatives’ activities have awakened in us nothing but profound disappointment. Not only do the demonstrably one-sided interpretations of the events in Ukraine not stand up to scrutiny: the same is true of the attempts to present the Kyiv regime as some kind of victim. This is going too far, even for the Personal Representatives of the Polish Chairmanship, which is actively promoting an anti-Russian agenda at the OSCE. Not to mention the fact that until quite recently the situation in that participating State as such did not particularly interest the Personal Representatives. This despite the fact that from year to year we called for attention to be paid to the flourishing of neo-Nazism encouraged by the Kyiv regime and to the persecution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Mr. Andrew Baker, who mentioned that he was the longest-serving of all the Personal Representatives, no doubt remembers that well.

There are serious questions to be asked about the reliability of the content of the press releases that the Personal Representatives refer to so often. Indeed, this content could be interpreted as the intentional spreading of disinformation. For example, that is the case with the assertion about the allegedly deliberate strike by the Russian armed forces against the memorial to the victims of Nazism in Babi Yar. As is known, the memorial complex was never a target under the special military operation.

The same is true of the attempts to blame Russia for the “destruction of religious and cultural heritage”. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), not a single one of the sites included in its World Heritage List has been damaged during the Russian special military operation in Ukraine. Moreover, there is copious evidence of the Ukrainian military setting up positions inside or near sites dedicated to religion, education, art, science and history. Not to mention the regular attacks by the Ukrainian military on culturally and historically significant buildings and religious buildings. In the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Luhansk People’s Republic alone they have destroyed 63 such buildings, including theatres, places of worship and monasteries.

Mr. Chairperson,

Professor Regina Polak ignores the long-standing plight of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), which the authorities in Kyiv are trying to extirpate from the country’s religious space.

A large-scale communications campaign has been launched against the UOC clergy with the aim of discrediting the Church’s priests. Ukrainian politicians and public figures are calling for the UOC to be banned, for all ecclesiastical property belonging to it to be seized for the benefit of the State, and for interference by the secular authorities in the affairs of other denominations.

A significant role in the onslaught against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is played by radical nationalists, who have long been raiding and seizing places of worship. Here are some recent examples which have come to public notice. On 26 May, the Church of the Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian in the village of Fursy (Kyiv region) was forcibly seized. On 9 May 2022, unknown individuals poured paint over the courtyard, fence, crosses and the main building of the Church of St. Spyridon of Trimythous in the village of Mali Dorohostai in the Rivne region. On 22 May 2022, Archpriest Volodymyr Mandzyuk, the rector of the Resurrection Church in the city of Stryi in the Lviv region, was attacked in the middle of divine service. On 23 May 2022, aggressively minded adherents of the “Orthodox Church of Ukraine” seized the Church of the Archdeacon Stephen in the village of Cherniatyn (Vinnytsia region).

In May 2022 alone, the Church of the Holy Prince Vladimir, Equal of the Apostles, in Lviv, which belongs to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, was attacked by vandals several times. On 1 May, radicals tried to disrupt a service in the church. On 8 May, unknown individuals doused the entrance door with sealing foam and graffitied the church building. On 14 May, vandals tried to set fire to the church and again desecrated its walls with graffiti. On 25 May, unknown individuals daubed obscenities on the church building. On 28 May, the church was again desecrated.

On 14 June, a group of unknown individuals forced their way into the house of Father Pyotr Monastyrsky, the rector of the Church of the Intercession in the village of Novozhyvotiv in the Vinnytsia region, which belongs to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. During the night of 19 to 20 June 2022, there was an arson attack on the aforementioned Church of the Holy Prince Vladimir, Equal of the Apostles, in Lviv; the law enforcement authorities have still not found the perpetrators. The failure by Ms. Polak to pay attention to these incidents, both in public and behind closed doors, indicates that she is not implementing her mandate.

Mr. Chairperson,

The problem of anti-Semitism continues to intensify in the OSCE area. According to data from the Anti-Defamation League, a non-governmental organization, a record 2,717 anti-Semitic incidents occurred in the United States of America in 2021, that is, seven incidents a day on average. This represents a

34 per cent increase from 2020. By the end of the first six months of 2022 the number of anti-Semitic incidents had already reached about 400.

In Canada, the police-reported crime statistics for 2021 revealed an increase of 27 per cent in the number of hate crimes compared with the previous reporting period. As before, Jews remain one of the most vulnerable groups: 487 crimes against them were committed. Moreover, there has been a general increase in the number of hate crimes against religious groups: by 260 per cent in the case of Catholics, by 71 per cent in the case of Muslims and by 47 per cent in the case of Jews.

According to the annual report of the German Federal Association of Departments for Research and Information on Antisemitism published in June, 2,738 instances of various manifestations of anti-Semitism were recorded in Germany in 2021. That is a 40 per cent increase from 2020.

Anti-Semitism is often accompanied by neo-Nazism and the glorification of Nazism, both of which are not only not prevented but even pandered to by the authorities in a number of countries, such as the Baltic States and Poland. Another alarming tendency, to which we are drawing Rabbi Baker's attention, is the whitewashing and rehabilitation of neo-Nazis in the media, including the Ukrainian neo-Nazis who are members of the Azov battalion.

We exhort Rabbi Baker to pay due attention to the aforementioned problems and not to lend himself to disinformation campaigns, such as the one about Babi Yar. In our view, the Jewish communities in Europe will hardly appreciate your excessive attention to Ukrainian topics, which in effect comes at the expense of protection of their rights.

Mr. Chairperson,

The OSCE participating States are not free from anti-Islamic manifestations either. According to data from the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the police recorded 6,720 such incidents in the United States in 2021. This is a 27-year high. According to data from the French Ministry of the Interior, the number of anti-Muslim incidents in France increased by 38 per cent in 2021. The situation in Denmark needs to be rectified: politicians there habitually indulge in hate speech towards Muslims and migrants. Not to mention the fact that anti-immigrant sentiment in the European Union is regularly identified in the reports of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights.

In a word, there is no shortage of problems in the OSCE area. We call on the relevant OSCE structures, including the three Personal Representatives, to ensure that their work is guided by consensus-based concepts approved by all the participating States, and not to engage in the promotion of the views of countries from the Western alliance or deal in highly confrontational ideas. Nor can anything good come out of a selective approach. At the very least, it is unprofessional. Additionally, we call on North Macedonia as the future holder of the Chairmanship to take a responsible approach to staffing matters and appointments.

Thank you for your attention.