

PC.DEL/165/12
2 March 2012

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
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AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 March 2012

Regarding manifestations of aggressive nationalism in the OSCE area

Mr. Chairperson,

We are once again obliged to draw the Permanent Council's attention to worrying facts that attest to a rise in aggressive nationalism in the OSCE region, including manifestations of neo-Nazism. What is particularly alarming is that these dangerous trends are not being properly rebuffed by the authorities.

There is no shortage of examples.

On 16 February radical nationalists were permitted to march in Kaunas under the slogan "Lithuania for the Lithuanians". This event was condemned not only by representatives of Lithuanian civil society but also by international human rights NGOs. The director of the Jerusalem office of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Efraim Zuroff, eloquently reflected the response of the Jewish community: "A march of several hundred young people wearing white armbands ... sends chills down the spines of the small remnant of Kaunas' once-thriving Jewish community which was totally decimated during the Holocaust". In his opinion, the silence on the part of the authorities in Vilnius and the international community will only encourage additional marches of this type.

Incidentally, as recently as in last year's report by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (published in September 2011), the Lithuanian authorities were urged to condemn such acts. The slogan "Lithuania for the Lithuanians" was described unequivocally by the Commission as inciting hatred.

It is puzzling that the decision by the Kaunas authorities to allow the aforementioned march was accompanied by a simultaneous ban on the holding of an alternative event – "For a Unanimous and Diverse Lithuania".

Frankly, we do not quite understand how this is in keeping with Lithuania's efforts last year as the holder of the OSCE Chairmanship to make the fight against anti-Semitism one of its priorities.

Let me turn to another subject. Despite protests by the international community and anti-fascist organizations, the now traditional Lukov March took place in Sofia on 18 February. The march is named in honour of General Hristo Lukov, who was famous for his radical views. According to the media, several hundred people participated in the march. During the rally the crowd loudly chanted the slogans “Death to all Communists” and “Macedonia was and is Bulgarian”. No comment is required, as they say.

We might also mention the continuing steps by the Estonian authorities to glorify those who assisted the Nazis. For example, on 14 February the Estonian Parliament adopted a declaration paying tribute to “freedom fighters”, which is contrary to obvious historical facts and deliberately falsifies the events of the past.

According to reports by human rights NGOs, as recently as 22 February the Reform Party concluded an agreement with the Union of so-called “fighters for the freedom of Estonia”, which provides for the creation of a fund to support them. The recent award of State honours to former fascist accomplices is also a cause of puzzlement.

In addition, attempts by the Latvian Government to justify the atrocities committed by the Latvian voluntary SS legion against the peaceful population of the Novgorod and Pskov regions, Belarus and the Riga ghetto are cause for outrage. They clearly fly in the face of the resolution adopted at the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly on the inadmissibility of certain practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism and xenophobia and also the recommendations in the recent country report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance.

Information about plans to organize fresh rallies of neo-Nazis in Lithuania and Latvia in March of this year is also cause for concern.

We believe it would be appropriate to recall that all the aforementioned countries are parties to the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. In it they undertook to “condemn all propaganda and all organizations which are based on ideas of superiority of one race or which attempt to justify [it]”, declare participation in such organizations or activities and “the provision of any assistance to racist activities, including the financing thereof” as offences punishable by law and also not permit “public authorities, national or local, to promote racial discrimination”.

Neo-Nazi marches and the glorification of former SS members and their cohorts who exterminated millions of people under the pretext of a theory of racial superiority are nothing other than propaganda for ideas of racism and have nothing to do with freedom of assembly or expression.

The aforementioned incidents demonstrate the need to step up efforts to implement the decisions of the Brussels and Madrid Ministerial Council meetings on promoting tolerance and non-discrimination.

The draft Vilnius Ministerial Council decision on combating contemporary forms of intolerance, which was proposed by the delegations of Russia, Belarus and Tajikistan, was intended to combat these phenomena. Unfortunately, because of the position of a group of countries it was not adopted.

In view of the fact that promoting tolerance and combating xenophobia is one of the OSCE's priorities, we call on the participating States, the Chairmanship and the institutions of the Organization not to ignore these facts and to give them an objective assessment.

Thank you for your attention.