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**STATEMENT BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1379th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 June 2022

In response to the report by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine

Mr. Villadsen,

Once again we have listened to your report with genuine interest. It leaves the abiding impression that the work of the office of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine takes place in some mythical prosperous country where human rights, including the rights of national minorities, are fully respected, the rule of law prevails, there is an effective judiciary and democratic institutions actually function. And the OSCE field operation you head is only helping to correct minor shortcomings. Nothing could be further from reality.

But, as it says in the Bible, there is a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them. The Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine has been working since 1999. Let us take a look at what has been achieved in this considerable time.

The “active work” to cultivate democratic standards led to Ukraine’s policy after the February 2014 coup d’état of establishing an ethnocratic regime that dictates to its citizens which language to speak and which to ban, which culture to develop and which to suppress, which historical events to celebrate and which to forget, and which church to attend and which to abolish.

Russian speakers in particular have suffered, as the regime’s policies have effectively turned them into second-class citizens. All these changes did not happen overnight. Norms that restrict the rights of the non-Ukrainian-speaking population to use their native language, to receive a proper education in it and to express themselves culturally have been methodically and systematically introduced into legislation and law enforcement practice. We have repeatedly drawn attention to this in the OSCE, not least in discussions with the Project Co-ordinator. However, these aspects have not been reflected in the Co-ordinator’s democratization and human rights programmes. As we understand it, there have been no effective attempts to persuade the Ukrainian authorities to at least begin to rectify this unpalatable situation.

The situation is no better with civil and political rights. For example, the inhabitants of entire areas of the former Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine are disenfranchised. We recall the scandalous resolution to that effect by the Ukrainian Central Election Commission on 8 August 2020 to cancel local

elections in large parts of Donbas. Or the extrajudicial crackdowns on undesirable public figures and political parties, culminating in the decision by the National Security and Defence Council (NSDC) of Ukraine in March to ban as many as 11 political parties. Apparently aware of the illegitimate nature of the NSDC's decision, which exceeded its powers, the Ukrainian authorities began to back up political repression with court rulings. A question for the Co-ordinator: how does this tally with the rule of law principles that you promote in your work? Can you now say that the implementation of projects under the years-long democratization and rule of law programme has been successful?

We can already see the results of the long-term efforts of the Co-ordinator to promote democratic control of the armed forces – which, by your own admission, Mr. Villadsen, have been carried out with the involvement of the European Union and NATO missions in Ukraine.

Yes, Mr. Villadsen, this is the Russian assessment. And it is no less important and meaningful than the voices of other OSCE participating States in this room. After all, no one has yet abandoned the foundations on which the work of our entire Organization is built – the equality of participating States and the consensus rule.

Now, Ukrainian nationalist paramilitary formations, whose members played a prominent role in the overthrow of constitutional power through an armed coup d'état in February 2014, have joined Ukraine's armed forces. In order to make infiltration of nationalists into the armed forces possible, the State put in place an enabling legal framework. Before this, a whole network of paramilitary formations had developed in Ukraine – from “patriotic” children's and youth camps to real combat units – openly espousing neo-Nazi ideas.

Since the beginning of the Ukrainian Government's punitive military operation in Donbas in 2014, so-called “volunteer battalions” have committed and are still committing atrocities against the civilian population there. Is this what “democratic control” of the armed forces looks like? Has the Co-ordinator ever raised these issues with the Government of Ukraine when determining programmatic activities?

Mr. Villadsen, your work on media self-regulation has been a downright disappointment. Do you seriously think that the media literacy project has been appropriate to the magnitude of the problems caused by the total suppression of media freedom in the country?

These are just some examples of the Ukrainian Government's massive and systematic violations of OSCE commitments. In the absence of a proper response from the Co-ordinator, it is clear that the work of this body has completely lost touch in its task of facilitating Ukraine's full implementation of its commitments – not selectively, in a manner convenient for the Ukrainian Government and its foreign sponsors, but completely.

By all appearances, getting Ukraine back on track with its commitments has not been part of the Project Co-ordinator's remit at all. In reality, only one “product” has been consistently produced – a respectable picture of Ukraine's “progress” in the field of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Given that the vast majority of projects have been financed through extrabudgetary funding (ten times the number of projects covered by the Unified Budget), this work format has obviously been guided in its entirety by the expectations of the Kyiv regime's foreign stakeholders. The Co-ordinator has effectively aligned himself with the long-term policy of a number of Western countries to fundamentally reshape Ukraine as anti-Russian.

In fact, for a long time nothing of the OSCE has remained in the Co-ordinator's work apart from the title. This is confirmed if only by the sad fact of your abandonment, Mr. Villadsen, in recent times of the

best practices previously observed by the head of this field operation – for example, the holding of informal briefings for all participating States on the eve of the report in the Permanent Council. No meetings in a small circle of privileged friends of the Kyiv regime from among EU Member States along with the United States of America can replace such briefings. Let me repeat: until your mandate comes to an end, it is your job to represent all of us – all 57 OSCE participating States, not just the European Union or NATO.

In such circumstances, we do not see any possibility of extending the Co-ordinator's mandate. We call on the Chairmanship and the Secretariat to submit a detailed plan for winding down the office of the Project Co-ordinator as soon as possible for consideration by the participating States together with the relevant adjustments to the draft OSCE Unified Budget for 2022.

One last thing, Mr. Villadsen. It seems that the host country failed to appreciate your efforts while you were working in Ukraine. Recently, the Ministry of Information and Press of the Donetsk People's Republic made public the originals of secret documents and videos stored in the Kramatorsk office of the Second Department of the Main Directorate of the Ukrainian Security Service in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. They show that the activities of you personally and the employees of the office you head in Ukraine were described by the Ukrainian Security Service as "reconnaissance and sabotage operations by the intelligence services of foreign States and/or activities of organizations, groups and individuals aimed at weakening the sovereignty of the country". External surveillance was carried out and contacts were monitored. It is reported that on the basis of an instruction from the Ukrainian Security Service's Counter-Intelligence Department, reference number 53/3 (Mariupol office), on 23 January 2020, your activities were classified as "intelligence interest". It is particularly noteworthy that your office staff – Iryna Nikolaieva, Hanna Lenko, Alla Yushchuk, Iryna Loik and others – consistently collected restricted information, including information as part of environmental and other projects you were implementing. We are sure that you have had time to read these publications in Ukrainian – the OSCE Secretariat is well informed about their existence. Any comments you might have on these documents would be welcome. After all, they affect the integrity of your staff.

Thank you for your attention.