



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA TO THE UN,
OSCE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Latvia, Ambassador Janis Zlamets
in response to the statement of the Russian Federation**

Permanent Council No.1220,
Vienna, 14th March 2019

Dear Chairman,

We note annual statement by distinguished Russian representative and would like to provide annual reply. It might sound repetitive, as indeed – nothing much has changed in a year.

No changes has happened within this year in events that took place more than 70 years ago. As you know in result of Nazi – Soviet cooperation and friendship and the Molotov - Ribbentrop Pact, Latvia was occupied by the Soviet Union in June 1940. A year before World War II military activities reached our country and Latvia to be occupied by Nazi Germany. Latvian State was occupied and did not participate in the World War II as a state.

However, despite of international conventions and common international law of the time, Nazi occupation regime used terror and repressions to forcibly draft people of Latvia in their military units. Without participation of the Latvian State.

Every year on March 16th number of former soldiers being forcibly drafted on Nazi side, choose to pay respect to their fallen comrades. Church services are held; people gather in cemeteries and lay flowers at the Monument of Freedom in Riga without any ideological pretext.

March 16th is not an official day of commemoration in Latvia. No Governmental official participate. It is a private event. Granted in line with fundamental rights and freedoms, including the freedom of assembly. This, however is done in compliance with the existing legislation and must not present threat to public order.

Any accusation of glorification of Nazism in Latvia is totally baseless.

It is essential also to repeat once again the following:

While because of occupation Latvia as a state did not participate in World War II, we have consistently condemned all crimes against humanity committed by occupation regimes. Latvia categorically denounces the Holocaust and mourns its victims.

We take those tragic issues really seriously and regret as inappropriate attempts by anyone to use them for rhetoric games.

Let me stress once again:

The core issue here, in fact, is the fundamental right of people for peaceful assembly as long as it happens in accordance with rules of public order. Nothing has changed in a year - we see this fundamental right being essential.

Thank you, Chairman.