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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1448th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

2 November 2023

**In response to the report by the Director of the
OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

Mr. Chairperson,
Director,

We have studied the report presented and should like to comment on it. Unfortunately, as is already something of a tradition, we are again obliged to express our categorical disagreement with the “Ukrainization” of the activities of our common executive structure, the use of non-consensus definitions by the management of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) with regard to the Russian special military operation, the assessments of the territorial structure of the Russian Federation and support for the initiatives of the OSCE Chairmanship of North Macedonia and other functionaries of the Organization, such as, for example, the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference. The same goes for the failure to note the flagrant inhuman practices in a number of OSCE participating States. Reactions along the lines of “your call is very important to us, please stay on the line” or pro forma responses to our appeals increasingly resemble an answering machine and testify, Director, to your slapdash attitude to your mandate and an unwillingness to take into account the opinions of all participating States if they are not in keeping with your personal convictions.

We are shocked at the lack of comments by the ODIHR, which is supposed to deal with human rights issues, democracy and the rule of law, on what is happening in Latvia. More than 3,000 Russian citizens have lost their residence permits and been ordered to leave the territory of Latvia by the end of November this year as a result of the implementation of discriminatory migration legislation. Russian nationals falling into this category no longer receive welfare benefits and pensions, and they will have difficulties in obtaining medical services. Or, Director, do you believe that the hateful Russophobic actions of the Latvian Government are in line with democratic standards and therefore do not warrant criticism? Incidentally, against this backdrop, the freezing of the process of appointment of the new OSCE Representative to the Latvian-Russian Joint Commission on Military Pensioners is particularly worrying. We urge the OSCE Chairmanship of North Macedonia to finally resolve this stalled personnel problem, which we have been talking about for several months now, ever since Mr. Helmut Napiontek left the post.

The electoral sphere was no exception in this context and is also affected by the destructive approaches of the Office's management. This is evident not only in the promotion of anti-Russian attitudes in election reports, but also in the public statements of the Office's staff, most recently during the seminar on 24 October. There can be no doubt that pandering to the Western alliance countries, which use every opportunity to politicize anything and everything, is destroying the work of the OSCE's human dimension and making it a victim of the opportunistic considerations of the Brussels bloc and the US Government. At the same time, we note the firm position of the seminar organizers, who did not give in to the provocation of some and gave the floor to the Russian experts as was their due.

We once again emphasize the need to develop uniform modalities for election observation agreed upon by all OSCE participating States. The "standard" invented by the ODIHR and described by its developers as a "gold standard" is a model of inconsistency, bias and hypocrisy. This fictitious criterion continues to be applied to participating States in different forms, including according to their geographical location, thereby dividing them into first-class "democratic" and second-class "non-democratic" countries.

Here are some concrete examples. Seven of the eight full-scale missions in 2023 were sent to Central Asian States, the Balkans and Türkiye. On the other hand, a limited mission of 31 experts was dispatched to Poland, despite the complex domestic political context, deep polarization and difficult electoral realities that called for the presence of a considerable number of short-term observers on the ground. By way of comparison, in a similar situation, a monitoring contingent of almost 300 people, that is, ten times as many, has been assigned to Serbia. We should like to hear explanations regarding the reasons for this significant difference.

We have also repeatedly noted the inconsistency of the Office's experts when describing the same processes in different participating States, where the rules of the game are clearly determined by the political situation. In the final report on the general elections and the presidential election in Türkiye (published in September), the authorities in Ankara were accused of violating paragraph 7.5 of the CSCE Copenhagen Document with what the experts described as "excessive" requirements for candidates. We would remind you that the provision in question refers to the fact that participating States will "respect the right of citizens to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties or organizations, without discrimination".

Against this backdrop, it remains a mystery as to why the interim report does not regard the amendments to the Moldovan Electoral Code concerning the exclusion of entire categories of persons from the electoral process, which were adopted a month before the voting, as contradicting the aforementioned paragraph, as well as the requirements of the Council of Europe and the ODIHR. In accordance with international standards regularly cited by observers, regulatory changes in key aspects of the electoral process less than one year before an election are ill-advised. In this case, we are talking about a radical change to the rules of the game in effect on the eve of election day. Maybe the experts decided to save their criticism for subsequent publications? Not to mention the biased antics of the country's authorities in preventing some Russian monitors from observing the elections. We believe that the Office's management should monitor what is happening in their area of responsibility more closely.

Incidentally, we also suggest that the ODIHR leadership instruct its staff more carefully with regard to their knowledge of the relevant materials. Otherwise, embarrassing situations can arise when basic commitments are distorted. In the final report on the assessment of the parliamentary elections in Turkmenistan published in October, the ODIHR mission, referring to paragraph 8 of the Copenhagen Document, notes the need for the authorities to ensure that "international observers are granted ... access to all election stakeholders and all parts of the election process."

We have double-checked – paragraph 8 reads as follows: “The participating States consider that the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, can enhance the electoral process for States in which elections are taking place. They therefore invite observers from any other CSCE participating States and any appropriate private institutions and organizations who may wish to do so to observe the course of their national election proceedings, to the extent permitted by law. They will also endeavour to facilitate similar access for election proceedings held below the national level. Such observers will undertake not to interfere in the electoral proceedings.” It is clear that this paragraph does not mean that observers should be present everywhere. It raises the question of the reliability of the recommendations made after such blatant distortions.

Unfortunately, there are plenty of such inconsistencies in the ODIHR’s work. On the whole, we are obliged to note that the focus on quantity – certainly in relation to the anti-Russian attacks that have become the main objective of the Office’s work – has severely affected the quality of the end product.

It seems that the autonomy ascribed to the ODIHR by the Western participating States is understood by the Director and his staff as a need to pick sides at a critical moment in history, either to deliberately pour oil on the fire or, owing to poor skills, to put out the fire with petrol, but in the end to invariably evade all responsibility – both for their actions and for their failure to act, which, given the specifics of the mandate of this executive structure, is sometimes much worse.

That is not going to happen. Russia, as an OSCE participating State, regrets that it has to give the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights a straight D.

Thank you for your attention.