

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/919/19
19 July 2019

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1236th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 July 2019

On the Global Conference for Media Freedom

Mr. Chairperson,

Unfortunately, we are unable to congratulate our British and Canadian colleagues on the successful holding of the Global Conference for Media Freedom in London on 10 and 11 July. On the contrary, instead of promoting such freedom, the event was an example of its trampling. Detailed assessments of this forum were given by the official representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia at a briefing on 17 July. I invite you to read them on the Ministry's website. I will dwell on only one aspect.

The organizers denied accreditation to correspondents of the television channel "Russia Today" and the news agency "Sputnik". Initially, as a justification, it was stated that the quota of media representatives invited to the event had allegedly been filled. The Russian journalists indicated that they had submitted an application a few weeks before the conference. After that, the Foreign Office intervened. They said: "We have not accredited "Russia Today" and "Sputnik" because of their active role in spreading disinformation." We regard this as a clear example of political censorship and another attempt to segregate the press.

Discrimination against journalists who wanted to participate in the conference discredited the very idea of the event. It is impossible to discuss the principles of freedom of the media and free access to information and at the same time grossly violate those principles. And what about the commitment to combating restrictions on the rights of journalists in our area, which was loudly declared here two weeks ago in the presence of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media? Or was the London conference only intended to discuss the situation in other countries, but not in the United Kingdom?

The executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, Joel Simon, also appealed to the organizers to reconsider this unjust decision. He stated that by refusing to allow "Russia Today" and "Sputnik" to participate in the conference on charges of propaganda, the British Government "risks undermining the very principles of free expression that the conference was intended to promote".

The situation was also noted by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Harlem Désir, who at the conference in London and recently in Bishkek highlighted that the British and Canadian organizers had to provide "Russia Today" and "Sputnik" with access to the conference. "We always encourage the participation of all interested journalists in such events," he stressed.

We hope that Mr. Désir, as prescribed in his mandate, will “concentrate ... on rapid response to serious non-compliance with OSCE principles and commitments by participating States in respect of freedom of expression and free media”. The United Kingdom has violated a number of such commitments, including the provisions of Milan Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/18 on the safety of journalists.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom not only denied accreditation to two media outlets from Russia, but also deprived the official Russian delegation of the opportunity to participate in the conference. The employee of the Information and Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, who was going to the event, was simply not issued a visa. And this is despite the invitation we received earlier from London and the employee’s registration for the conference. That is what you call British hospitality.

Thank you for your attention.