

Delegation of the Russian Federation

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CO-OPERATION OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE OSCE SUPPLEMENTARY
HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING ON FREEDOM OF
MOVEMENT AND HUMAN CONTACTS**

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**Session 2: Benefits of cross-border human contacts and strengthening
co-operation among OSCE participating States in this field**

Mr. Moderator,

Freedom of movement is one of Russia's key priorities. We adhere to the commitments in this area and we expect other participating States to do the same.

As you know, the principle of the indivisibility of security applies within the OSCE. It includes the commitment by States not to strengthen their own security at the expense of the security of others. It would be important in addition to consolidate the principle of the indivisibility of freedom. Strengthening the freedoms of one's own citizens, including freedom of movement, while limiting the freedoms of citizens of other countries is unacceptable.

The commitment by States to simplify gradually the procedures for entry and exit is enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. Unfortunately, there are problems with its implementation. Let me give you two examples.

It is no secret that prior to their accession to the European Union (EU), candidate countries are obliged to introduce visas for countries with which they had previously enjoyed a visa-free regime but which are not included in the so-called Schengen white list. What we now have is a situation where the visa policy is tightened vis-à-vis some countries while others receive advantages. We urge the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to analyse this situation and provide an evaluation as to how far Regulation (EC) No. 539/2001 of 15 March 2001, which establishes this requirement, as well as the provisions of the relevant EU accession treaties, are in keeping with OSCE commitments.

The other example concerns the accessibility of visa services, something that has already been mentioned today. We should like to draw attention to the practice of setting up regional visa "processing hubs", which deal with citizens of several countries all at the same time. This leads to a situation where, in order to obtain visas, citizens are required to apply

not to the consulate in their own country, but to travel to the country where the “hub” is located, sometimes several hundred kilometres away. This practice should also be evaluated in terms of whether it is in keeping with the commitments in the Helsinki Final Act regarding the gradual simplification of entry and exit procedures.

These kinds of problems are resulting in a considerable deterioration in the conditions for human contacts, tourism opportunities, business and participation in sporting events.

In 2014 Russia will host the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi and in 2018 the FIFA World Cup, which will take place in 11 Russian cities. There are plans to abolish visas for participants and fans during these events. We believe that this practice could be mentioned in an OSCE decision on this subject.

The movement of people is closely linked to security issues. The risks posed by migration flows and organized crime, which skilfully uses the opportunities presented by freedom of movement and abuses the right to asylum, are currently priority issues.

Let me give as an example a familiar plan used by criminals. In preparation for a major crime or terrorist attack, the families of the main perpetrators escape to other countries ahead of time, usually by abusing the right to asylum. Immediately after the crime has been committed, the perpetrators move within a few hours to join their relatives, apply for asylum and are then beyond the reach of justice.

There is a need for closer co-operation among law enforcement agencies and a more considered approach to migration strategies and asylum policy.

In conclusion, we should like to advocate the development within the OSCE of a dialogue on freedom of movement and human contacts, and to support the proposals we have heard regarding the drafting of a ministerial decision on this subject in time for the Ministerial Council meeting in Kyiv this December.

Thank you for your attention.