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**RIGHT OF REPLY BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1492nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 October 2024

In response to the statements on Ukraine by a number of OSCE participating States

Madam Chairperson,

I am obliged to exercise my right of reply in connection with a number of issues that have just been raised.

First of all, the topic of journalists. We can see the feigned concern shown by our “Anglo-Saxon” opponents and their protégés in Kyiv over the fate of certain individuals who have ended up in Russian penal establishments. We will not comment on the work of these establishments, which is carried out in strict compliance with the provisions of Russian law. However, we would emphasize that, as it stands, our opponents are clearly looking for new propaganda tricks and manifestly applying double standards.

Let us take a closer look at their tactics. They are now trying to convince us all that the representatives of Western countries sponsoring the Kyiv regime, and indeed that regime itself, are displaying an astoundingly principled stance when it comes to protecting the life and limb of journalists and their professional rights.

We are being asked to believe this after such cases as that of Julian Assange, whose health was ruined, or that of Chelsea Manning, who was convicted for contacting the press, or that of the political pundit and publicist Dimitri Simes, who is currently being persecuted, and so on – we will not list all the names. We are being asked to believe that the dozens of Russian journalists who have lost their lives since 2014 as they sought to tell the truth about the events in Donbass never actually existed.

All these and other tragedies are simply being passed over in silence by our opponents. As was the case, for example, with the attempt on the life of Yevgeny Popov, a correspondent for the Rossiya television channel, who in August 2024 was attacked in the Kursk region by a Ukrainian drone. It was a miracle that he survived at all.

It is remarkable that the representatives of the Western camp are now taking such great pains over certain citizens of Ukraine on Russian territory. Let us take a look, though, at how they are standing up for the rights of citizens of their countries who have ended up in the clutches of the Kyiv regime.

The journalist Gonzalo Lira, who had dual (US and Chilean) citizenship, perished in the torture chambers of the Security Service of Ukraine in January 2024. He had been covering the activities of the Kyiv regime's leadership with a critical eye, and for that he was repeatedly arrested and subjected to torture until, ultimately, he died in a Ukrainian prison. After one of many interrogations, or rather beatings, lasting several hours, Mr. Lira began to suffer from health issues and he was never to recover.

We are not surprised that this and other outrageous examples of reprisals have not elicited any reaction from the permanent missions of Western countries to the OSCE. Something that has also become customary is the silence, or rather politically motivated stance, of OSCE officials, whose direct duties include the protection of media freedom. All this eloquently demonstrates what their words are worth when they start talking about concern for journalists, about concern for the life and limb of these and for their right to exercise their profession.

By way of responding, we would therefore recommend that our opponents stop displaying glaring double standards and offering us a black-and-white picture of the world.

I would also recall that journalists operating in a combat zone have not only rights but also obligations – including under international humanitarian law as it pertains to protection of the rights of journalists covering combat operations by both parties to a conflict. These rules presuppose strict compliance with the legislation of the countries on whose territory they intend to go about their journalistic activities.

I would be curious to hear what our Western colleagues have to say to us about the egregious breach of Russian legislation by a number of groups of Western journalists and camera operators in the Kursk region of the Russian Federation, which these media workers entered together with occupying troops from the Ukrainian armed forces during their attack. Specifically, this refers to, among others, Oz Katerji, a contributor to the US magazine *Foreign Policy*; Askold Krushelnycky, a journalist from the British newspaper *The Independent*; Catherine Norris, a correspondent for France 24; Kathryn Diss and Fletcher Yeung, journalists from the Australian television channel ABC; Nick Walsh, a CNN reporter; Olesia Borovyk and Diana Butsko, two Ukrainian correspondents; Nick Connolly, a Deutsche Welle journalist; Nataliia Nagorna, a correspondent for the Ukrainian television channel 1+1; and a reporting team from *The Sun* made up of the defence editor Jerome Starkey, the producer Den Savenkov and the photographer Ian Whittaker.

Moving on now to the issue of chemical weapons. For the information of the Kyiv regime's envoys: the Russian Federation destroyed its stockpiles of such weapons in 2017 and duly notified the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, whereupon this was verified through the relevant monitoring mechanisms. So why not stop indulging in speculations about “thousands of instances of the use of chemical substances by Russia”?

Moving on again. The distinguished Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom regaled us with a very important reflection on the background to the situation in Ukraine going back to 2013. It was presented in such a way as to make it seem that Russia had been exerting economic pressure on the Ukrainian authorities at the time, and that this ultimately led to the crisis. However, let us recall what actually happened back then.

At the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in 2013, the European Union deviated, for the first time in its recent history, from a purely economic thrust in its activities and forced Ukraine as a State beyond the EU borders to make a geopolitical choice: either to be with Russia or to be with the European Union. To

that end, it drew on the negotiation process for Ukraine's accession to the Association Agreement for partnership and co-operation with the European Union.

I would remind everyone in this room that Ukraine at the time was in a free trade area with the Russian Federation. Being at the same time in an association with the European Union and in a free trade area with Russia was economically and legally impossible – we pointed this out to both the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Brussels. That is why in the course of 2013, which proved to be a very long year, there were several rounds of negotiations between Russia and the European Commission to try to persuade the EU not to bring Ukraine to heel. Yet, that is what the European Commission did in the end. The consequences are well known to everyone. It is, therefore, not Russia that bears responsibility for the economic component of what took place in 2013 and set the stage for the ensuing crisis on the Maidan.

And, lastly, about the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We note the growing criticism being directed against China and North Korea by our Western colleagues here in this room, for which purpose they have now started methodically and systematically enlisting partner countries from the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group, in particular South Korea and Japan. We regard these alarming signals as being a quite obvious symptom of how the "Anglo-Saxon" world is bent on forcing a militarization of the Asia-Pacific region, on involving Asian countries in the preparations for a military conflict there. It is in this light that we interpret the efforts by the United States of America and the United Kingdom to establish new military blocs in the region and to align those new military blocs with NATO, thereby extending NATO's area of operation far beyond the Alliance's traditional confines.

To our colleagues in the West, and also our South Korean and Japanese colleagues, we would once again say this: Russia and the other countries in the Asia-Pacific region are not subject to the dictates of the "Anglo-Saxons" or indeed of Western "civilization" – our countries intend to and will pursue bilateral and multilateral co-operation among themselves in the fields and in the manner that they deem to be necessary. We should like to call upon our Western colleagues to endeavour to prevent a military escalation in the Asia-Pacific region, and not to seek to bring about a dramatic turn of events there.

Thank you for your attention.