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**STATEMENT BY
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THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1381st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 July 2022

On the ongoing gross violations of the rights of the Russian and Russian-speaking population by some Western OSCE participating States

Mr. Chairperson,

We are obliged to continue drawing the Permanent Council's attention to the unrelenting discrimination against the Russian and Russian-speaking population by a number of Western OSCE participating States. This problem is so deep-rooted in some countries that it has even required institutional solutions. In the Federal Republic of Germany, for example, the post of ombudsperson for the rights of Russians in Germany has been established.

Unfortunately, as a result of the Russophobia fuelled by the Western media and politicians, parishioners of the Russian Orthodox Church and religious sites have come under attack. The United Kingdom's authorities went even further and imposed sanctions against Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia on spurious pretexts. This is undoubtedly an absurd, politically motivated step by the UK Government aimed at deliberately burning bridges in its relations with Russia.

Places of worship and churches of the Russian Orthodox Church have suffered damage in many Western OSCE participating States. The Church of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker in Oxford (United Kingdom) has been ransacked by burglars. In Germany, instances of attacks on places of worship and the desecration of Orthodox churches have been recorded in Düsseldorf, Essen, Krefeld, Hanover, Berlin and Bielefeld. In Canada, All Saints Russian Orthodox Church in Calgary and St. Sophia's Church in Victoria (British Columbia) have been desecrated.

In a number of countries Russophobia has been accompanied by neo-Nazi manifestations. For example, a Nazi swastika was painted on the walls and windows of the church of St. Nicholas's parish of the Moscow Patriarchate in Reykjavik (Iceland). A similar fate befell a church consecrated to St. Nicholas the Wonderworker in an Italian city. What else can we expect when, in an attempt to justify the actions of the Kyiv regime and demonize Russia, prominent Italian media – *Corriere della Sera* and *la Repubblica* – present the Ukrainian neo-Nazis of the Azov battalion as harmless "Robin Hoods" and even "intellectuals" who dip into the works of the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant. We would remind you that we are talking about a formation which openly professes and promotes neo-Nazi ideology and employs symbols

used by the Third Reich. Its official emblem is the Wolf's Hook (Wolfsangel), which was used in Nazi Germany. Perhaps instead of boasting about its funding of odious extrabudgetary projects on Ukraine that have little to do in practice with real support for, and protection of, human rights, the Italian Government should consider addressing the serious pressing problems in its own country.

Red paint was sprayed on the noticeboards of the Russian Orthodox Church of All Saints in Strasbourg (France). Numerous hostile comments about the church's archpriest and parishioners have been posted on social media. Archpriest Andrey (Eliseev) of St. Nicholas's Cathedral in Nice and the clergy of the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Paris received anonymous letters in which they were threatened with death if they refused to leave the country in the near future. Furthermore, threats to kill priests "as stooges of the Russian authorities" have been regularly posted on social media.

This, however, is not surprising: France, the "eldest daughter of the Church", is well known for its anti-Christian sentiments and militant secularism. More than 800 anti-Christian incidents were recorded in France in 2021 alone; earlier figures are even higher. And it is these incidents that account for most of the anti-religious acts recorded. The Paris-based Observatory of Christianophobia records such incidents on an almost daily basis. However, even against this backdrop, the current upsurge in Russophobic sentiment stands out.

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation regarding the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) continues to deteriorate rapidly. As is well known, the realization of a political project by the former President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, to create a local "Orthodox Church of Ukraine" was the catalyst for these alarming processes. At that time, with the encouragement of the United States of America and other countries of the Western alliance and for political purposes, the course was actually set to eliminate the largest Orthodox community in the country – the canonical UOC, which comprised over 12,000 parishes.

Today, the canonical church is being forced to cease its ministry in a number of regions of the country. The main instrument of pressure by the representatives of the Kyiv regime remains the creation of legal prohibitions at the level of local government. On 13 June, members of the Boryspil City Council reported that UOC activities had been suspended "during the period of Russian aggression". All Church premises have been cordoned off and "special conditions" for their work have been imposed – in other words, there is direct interference in the life of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Similar decisions were taken by the Bila Tserkva and Cherkasy City Councils on 16 and 23 June, respectively, and by the Lviv authorities on 28 June.

In addition, on 17 June, the mayor of Khmelnytskyi, Oleksandr Symchyshyn, instructed the city council's land resources department to draw up plans for the termination of the right of "hostile religious organizations" to use their plots of land so as to "stimulate the process of separation of religious communities from the Russian Orthodox Church". Over the past four months, the UOC has already counted some forty instances of restrictions or prohibitions on its activities in the Cherkasy, Ivano-Frankivsk, Khmelnytskyi, Kyiv, Lviv, Rivne, Sumy, Ternopil, Vinnytsia, Volyn, Zakarpattia and Zhytomyr regions.

The situation is critical in the Ivano-Frankivsk region, where on 26 June, the local administration ruled in favour of the schismatics to re-register the Church of the Nativity of Christ – the last functioning UOC place of worship in the region.

The seizing of churches by force continues, usually while the local law enforcement authorities stand idly by or even assist in this. In places where churches cannot be seized, it is not uncommon for the

buildings to be subjected to arson attacks or vandalized and for the clergy to be intimidated and beaten up. The Ukrainian Security Service targets those churches where people hiding from the conflict find refuge. It is telling that those who carry out these aggressive attacks seek to disseminate videos of such incidents via social media in anticipation of a subsequent domino effect.

Here are a few of the latest outrageous examples. Radicals in the village of Sulymiv in the Lviv region prevented more than a hundred worshippers from entering the UOC-affiliated Church of the Ascension. In the village of Cherniatyn (Zhmerynka district of the Vinnytsia region), supporters of the “Orthodox Church of Ukraine” disrupted a service in the Church of the Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen, shouting threats at the priest and parishioners. In the village of Fursy (Bila Tserkva district of the Kyiv region), armed men stormed the Church of the Apostle John the Evangelist. The schismatics provoked a clash on the church premises and, using physical force against parishioners and the archpriest of the church, broke down the entrance door. In the city of Stryi in the Lviv region, Ukrainian nationalists threw bright green paint in the face of Archpriest Volodymyr Mandzyuk during the Divine Liturgy. In addition to attacking the priest, the perpetrators also sprayed hate slogans on his car and house. In the city of Khmelnytskyi that we have already mentioned, the Holy Assumption of the Virgin Mary Church was seized. The same fate befell the Church of the Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian in the village of Skulyn (Kovel district of the Volyn region). In the village of Kolodne (Zbarazh district of the Ternopil region), “priests” and supporters of the political entity that is the “Orthodox Church of Ukraine” attempted to seize St. Nicholas’s Church. In total, according to open sources, more than 250 churches have been seized since the beginning of this year alone.

Mr. Chairperson,

The cases we have listed today are in flagrant violation of a number of OSCE commitments. Not least, paragraph 40 of the 1990 CSCE Copenhagen Document, in which the participating States, in particular, “clearly and unequivocally condemn ... racial and ethnic hatred, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and discrimination against anyone, as well as persecution on religious and ideological grounds”. A similar provision is also contained in the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe.¹ At the CSCE Summit in Helsinki in 1992, the participating States also stressed “the vital role of tolerance, understanding and co-operation in the achievement and preservation of stable democratic societies”. In 2002, the OSCE Ministerial Council in Porto once again condemned in the strongest terms “hate speech and occurrences of discrimination based on religion or belief”.

The Western countries should comply strictly with the OSCE Ministerial Council decisions on tolerance and non-discrimination, in particular Madrid Ministerial Council Decision No. 10/07. It demands in no uncertain terms that political representatives “strongly ... reject and condemn manifestations of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination and intolerance, including against Christians, Jews, Muslims and members of other religions, as well as violent manifestations of extremism associated with aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism, while continuing to respect freedom of expression”.

Mr. Chairperson,

We call on the representatives of the alliance of Western countries to finally start honouring their international obligations and to stop reducing everything exclusively to public reactions to the special military operation in Ukraine. These are propaganda statements that do not correspond to reality. We also

¹ “We express our determination to combat all forms of racial and ethnic hatred, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and discrimination against anyone as well as persecution on religious and ideological grounds.”

demand once again that the representatives of the OSCE executive structures unambiguously respond, in accordance with their mandates, to the facts we have listed.

Thank you for your attention.