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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 November 2010

Regarding the attack on the journalist Oleg Kashin

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to inform the participating States that during the night from 5 to 6 November Moscow was the scene of an act of outrageous cruelty that has shocked the Russian public. In the vicinity of his home, Mr. Oleg Kashin, a correspondent for the newspaper *Kommersant*, was brutally beaten. Mr. Kashin received extremely serious injuries and has undergone three operations. The doctors regard his condition as serious, but with a noticeable sign of improvement. Fortunately, his life is not in danger.

In the wake of this attack, criminal proceedings were initially instituted under the Criminal Code article "Attempted murder". However, the crime has been subsequently reclassified under a more serious heading, namely "Attempted murder by a group of persons". This article provides for punishment in the form of imprisonment for a period of up to 20 years.

Criminal investigators who examined the scene of the crime were involved in the case at the earliest stage. The material evidence recovered, including recordings from video cameras near the scene of the attack, has been introduced in the proceedings. Some 30 persons who know Oleg Kashin have given initial testimony with a view to establishing the reasons and motives for the crime. The law enforcement agencies have used the media to call on all witnesses to the event to help in the investigations. It cannot be ruled out that, following a number of expert analyses, including tests of DNA samples, it will be possible to get to the thugs behind this crime.

Mr. Dmitry Medvedev, the President of the Russian Federation, has ordered the Prosecutor General to accord particular attention to this investigation. At the same time, the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs has set up an operational investigatory task force, including Moscow criminal investigatory officers, personnel from the Investigatory Directorate under the Office of the Prosecutor General, and other specialists.

As far as the motives for the crime are concerned, two main scenarios have been identified. According to an official representative of the Investigatory Committee within the

Office of the Prosecutor General, the attack on the journalist might have been sparked by his professional activities in the form of his hard-hitting publications in the media, or by his personal position as a citizen, which he regularly expressed in his Internet blog.

This incident, which triggered a major public response, has in recent days been an important news topic for the leading Russian television channels. There have been a series of picketing actions near the building of the Moscow Municipal Directorate of Internal Affairs, involving many well-known Russian journalists and public figures, who have demanded a speedy investigation of the attempt on the life of this journalist. The Public Chamber has raised the question of introducing more severe punishments for crimes committed against representatives of the media community. In the opinion of Pavel Gusev, a member of the Chamber and the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Moskovskiy komsomolets*, journalists must be put on an equal footing in terms of their profession with police officers.

At a meeting with the staff of the newspaper *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, the President of Russia expressed his conviction that those involved in the attack on the journalist, an attack that is not a “typical criminal offence”, will be identified and punished. He literally said the following (and I quote): “These forces must be identified. Whoever was involved in this crime will be punished, regardless of his or her position, social status or other merits, assuming that that person has them”.

It would also be well to note that Mr. Mikhail Fedotov, the new head of the Council under the President of the Russian Federation for the Promotion of Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights, has turned over to the Head of State a series of draft amendments to the Criminal Code, whose effect would be to introduce more severe penalties for attacks on journalists.

In conclusion, we should like to call on our OSCE partners to show a sympathetic attitude to what has happened, to refrain from hasty conclusions and to avoid inflaming political passions in the wake of the incident involving Oleg Kashin, particularly in terms of general assessments regarding media freedom in Russia.

Thank you for your attention.