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**STATEMENT BY MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH,  
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1337th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 September 2021

**On the deletion by YouTube of Russia Today's German-language channels**

Madam Chairperson,

On 28 September, we celebrated the International Day for Universal Access to Information, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2019. This is a good occasion to revisit the urgent problems in this field within the OSCE area, as the situation there is far from ideal, to say the least. For example, the repression of undesirable media outlets continues, far-fetched criminal cases are being brought against journalists, and they are detained, interrogated, their accreditation revoked, their equipment seized and their bank accounts blocked. Moreover, the phenomenon of censorship of the information space is gaining momentum in the OSCE area, with new forms constantly appearing in relation to alternative viewpoints.

However, clearly not everyone by any means agrees as to what exactly access to information means. On 28 September we witnessed another act of information aggression by the United States video platform YouTube. This time, the two German-language channels of the Russia Today group, RT DE and Der Fehlende Part, were the targets, and their accounts were deleted without the right to restore them.

Attempts by the Internet giant to link such egregious actions to some abstract "violation of internal community rules" as justification for this manifestation of gross censorship and suppression of freedom of expression are unacceptable. The political subtext of YouTube's actions is evident. These actions are in line with the US Government's foreign policy objectives of excluding from the global airwaves those sources of information that present an alternative viewpoint and that seriously compete with the Western media mainstream. Moreover, there is no doubt that such unlawful actions against a media project that is the fourth most popular German-language medium in the "news and politics" category were undertaken by YouTube with the *de facto* support of the German authorities. This is the latest in a string of examples of the infringement of the rights of Russia Today journalists in a number of OSCE participating States. I would remind you that this resource has been subjected to harassment quite openly for years, including the blocking of bank accounts and baseless accusations of propaganda and spreading disinformation.

As a result of a massive politically motivated sweep by YouTube, some 700,000 subscribers to the Internet channels in question lost their source of choice overnight. Their fundamental right to freedom of

information, enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and a number of OSCE commitments, is being cynically trampled on.

According to Willy Wimmer, former Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, what happened to the German-language channels of Russia Today is reminiscent of Germany's worst days. "RT has become part of the European freedom of the press. We citizens have a right to obtain information and to have access to high-class journalism regardless of where it comes from."

Such blatant disregard for international human rights obligations is also a matter of concern for the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Teresa Ribeiro. She believes that it is important for freedom of expression, media freedom and access to information to be taken into consideration when deciding to remove an account from a channel, and for the reasons for taking such a decision to be transparently stated.

For our part, we reiterate our call for a concerted effort to develop a universal mechanism for monitoring social media platforms.

We should also add that blatantly hostile actions against Russian media outlets carrying out their professional duties in the digital and traditional segments of the information space will not remain without an appropriate response from Russia. Apparently, exhortations alone will not change the situation.

Thank you for your attention.