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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1389th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 September 2022

On the final report of the ODIHR observers on the presidential election in France

Mr. Chairperson,

We have carefully studied the final report of the mission deployed by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to assess the presidential election in France. We are obliged to comment on it above all in terms of shortcomings in the Office's election-related activities and the ODIHR's widespread application of double standards.

First and foremost, we are deeply disappointed by the way in which the ODIHR's biased position on Ukraine in the context of the special military operation being conducted by Russia since 24 February is, not for the first time, creeping into the electoral field. The expression "the war in Ukraine", repeated several times in the report in question, does not stand up to scrutiny. Similar "descriptive phrases" that we have noted in other reports on elections are likewise unacceptable. I would remind you that the ODIHR was given a mandate for its work by all the participating States of our Organization, and not by a particular group of countries. We urge the representatives of our common executive structure to eschew non-consensus, highly confrontational wording in its official publications.

Let us now move on to France as such. We are surprised by the observation format deployed in Paris, namely a small assessment mission comprising a seven-strong team. The ODIHR's numerous comments on all aspects of the electoral system point to a mismatch between the chosen format on the one hand, and the electoral and associated domestic political realities on the other. Especially if one bears in mind the way in which France consistently violates even its basic commitments under paragraph 8 of the CSCE Copenhagen Document of 1990. Thus, election observation by international and civil society bodies is to this day not officially provided for in France. In such circumstances, full-scale observation by the ODIHR would have been appropriate – all the more so given that the presidential election in one of the largest countries in Europe is a significant event in the OSCE area as a whole.

However, the ODIHR has remained true to form and gone down the beaten track of geographical imbalances, again displaying double standards. The figures speak for themselves. Over the past year, the ODIHR has, with rare exceptions, deployed hundreds of observers as part of full-scale missions to States "east of Vienna". Moreover, many electoral processes in Western countries, principally in European Union

Member States, have remained off the radar for the ODIHR. In this way there continues to be a subjective and unjustified separation of OSCE countries into “mature” and “immature” democracies.

The ODIHR’s double standards are also evident in the text of its final report on the presidential election in France, with whose authorities the Office overtly seeks to ingratiate itself. Despite the lamentable situation regarding the media, the ODIHR presented a number of alarming issues in a highly muted fashion or ignored them completely. For example, we did not see a single word about the discrimination against the Russian media outlets RT France and Sputnik. They were first denied access to the Élysée Palace and other government institutions. Subsequently they were blocked altogether. We have already spoken about this topic at length during the current meeting of the Permanent Council.

We were struck by the attempts of the mission’s “experts” to smooth over the serious criticisms by international bodies with regard to the 2018 law against the manipulation of information. To that end, they used a crude editorial trick: the comments were simply set in small type and relegated from the main text into a footnote. Meanwhile, similar criticisms concerning other States are printed in much more prominent fashion.

Significantly, many reports of violations and fraud at the time of the election ultimately did not find their way into the document, although such reports were available even in the public domain – for example, the forcible dispersal of large-scale anti-government protests throughout France upon conclusion of the second round of the election. But the seven experts sent to that country apparently did not see that. Or they could not see it, since the small size of the team simply precluded them from covering all issues.

In this regard, we are once again compelled to note that the “gold standard” of the ODIHR’s election methodology is seriously malfunctioning. The reason for this is the lack of collectively agreed election observation rules at the OSCE. It is high time to develop such rules jointly.

Thank you for your attention.