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**STATEMENT BY  
MR. ALEXANDER ZHURAVSKIY,<sup>1</sup> MEMBER OF THE DELEGATION  
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE OSCE CONFERENCE ON  
ANTI-SEMITISM AND ON OTHER FORMS OF INTOLERANCE**

Cordoba, 8 and 9 June 2005

Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished Participants,

The Ministry of Regional Development of the Russian Federation was established in September 2004, among other things to safeguard the stable development of the peoples of Russia and to deal with questions relating to inter-ethnic relations.

The Ministry has drafted amendments to the State ethnic policy of the Russian Federation. This fundamental document is designed to ensure observance of the interests of every people in Russia, to establish the basis for their stable development, to foster public tolerance and to combat manifestations of anti-Semitism, xenophobia and extremism.

The Ministry has drafted the second national report on implementation of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which contained a detailed study of Russian legislation and the activities of the State authorities concerning observance of the rights and ethno-cultural development of national minorities.

The Ministry is currently setting up an inter-agency group to co-ordinate the ratification by Russia of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. It has also set up a Russian steering committee for the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples declared by the United Nations.

We strive to achieve transparency in the decisions taken by involving institutions of civil society in conciliation processes and we conduct regular consultations with representatives of autonomous ethno-cultural groups, non-governmental organizations and human rights organizations, including those present here.

I should like to point out that the leaders of Jewish religious organizations are always present and speak at meetings of the Government Committee for Religious Associations and also sit on the Presidential Council on Co-operation with Religious Organizations. The last

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1 Deputy Director of the Department for Inter-Ethnic Relations of the Ministry of Regional Development of the Russian Federation, Deputy Chairman of the Committee for Religious Associations of the Government of the Russian Federation.

meeting of the Council, incidentally, took place on 1 June this year and was devoted to questions of tolerance and interconfessional co-operation. Mr. Berel Lazar, Chief Rabbi of Russia, spoke at this meeting.

The special federal programme on the formation of guidelines for developing tolerance and preventing extremism in Russian society (2001–2005) has been assigned the task of disseminating within the Russian population the idea of religious and ethnic tolerance. We are currently considering an extension to this programme.

The Ministry is preparing a special federal programme on ethno-cultural development of the Russian regions (2006–2008), which is designed to create a basis for stable development of the peoples of Russia and also to effect regular monitoring of inter-ethnic relations. One of the main focuses of the monitoring will be questions of intolerance, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. We will receive information from the regions, State bodies and non-governmental organizations. Moreover, the programme provides for the guaranteed upholding of best practices in combating extremism and the promotion of interconfessional and intercultural dialogue.

In the absence of concerted action, the conditions are ripe for extremist national and ethno-confessional associations to operate. According to data from the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, for example, there are 141 youth groups with an extremist orientation with a total membership of 4,800 people carrying out activities with undesirable consequences on the territory of the Russian Federation.

In 2004, 133 crimes of an extremist nature were committed in Russia. A total of 36 people were convicted, 21 of whom were sentenced to imprisonment. As far as anti-Semitic offences are concerned, they can be divided into two groups: (1) crimes involving publications in the mass media, and the printing and dissemination of anti-Semitic literature, of which there were 13 cases in 2004; (2) crimes of violence, the desecration of Jewish cemeteries and the proclamation of anti-Semitic slogans in public places.

The most important element in combating xenophobia and other forms of intolerance is the attitude of the media and their willingness to create an environment of informed moral repudiation of those who advocate racist, ethnic and religious intolerance. It must be made difficult for those who are intolerant of others to disseminate information easily.

There are 1,355 printed periodicals and 9,301 electronic media registered in Russia that deal with national and ethno-confessional questions, including those published in the languages of the peoples of Russia. All of them influence the development of tolerance, mutual respect and a love of peace within the population.

There is a need for concerted efforts, however, to draft a joint European strategy to combat manifestations of ethnic and religious intolerance and xenophobia and to step up the exchange of monitoring material regarding intolerance, both within Russia and in the European community. Moreover, there should be no double standards, as is the case, for example, in Latvia and Estonia, recent members of the European Union, where there is discrimination against the Russian-speaking minority (not only ethnic Russians but also Russian-speaking Jews). Russian language schools are being closed and members of the ethnic minority are not being granted citizenship. We believe that the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the High Commissioner on National

Minorities, Mr. Rolf Ekéus, have the resources to intensify monitoring in the OSCE area, including the Baltic States, with particular account taken of the decisions adopted at the third Council of Europe summit in Warsaw. Russia is also willing to assist in this process.

Finally, on the opening day of the Conference there was discussion of violations of the rights of Maris in Russia. We cannot agree with this. The Maris are the titular people of the Republic of Mari-El with their own national schools and political elite, and there is no need for them to “hide underground”, as someone claimed. On 2 June a meeting was held of the Executive Committee of the Consultative Committee of the Association of Finno-Ugric Peoples of the Russian Federation, at which it was decided to hold the next conference on the Finno-Ugric peoples of Russia in autumn this year. Russia would also like to provide every possible assistance in this respect.