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PC.DEL/585/20/Corr.1*)
16 June 2020

Original: ENGLISH



United States Mission to the OSCE

Right of Reply to the Russian Federation on Developments in the Occupied Territories of Georgia

As delivered by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 28, 2020

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

First of all I would like to second Georgia's response. There was a comment made about going into the territory of South Ossetia. There is no territory of South Ossetia. It is an occupied part of Georgia. That territory is Georgia's territory. A comment was made with respect to going to the border of South Ossetia. There is no border with South Ossetia. This is all Georgian territory.

With respect to my Right of Reply, I want to confirm the comment of my Georgian colleague with respect to the Lugar Center and that is a Georgian Institution. The United States condemns Russia's disinformation campaign about Georgia's response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, which is a transparent attempt to exploit the public health situation in Georgia and the region for its own ends. Moscow is once again spreading lies about a highly-regarded research institute in Georgia, the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health at the Richard C. Lugar Center for Public Health, this time during an ongoing and serious pandemic, they do these things.

Let me just take a moment to expose the Russian government's attempt to use the pandemic as an opportunity to amplify its malign influence, here by spreading fables about a highly-regarded research institute in the Republic of Georgia. Here's the truth: The Lugar Center was established to identify and address disease outbreaks just like COVID-19. Through judicious use of limited testing resources, proactive planning and disease monitoring, reliable public messaging, and coordinated communication with senior Ministry of Health officials, it has informed public health policy decisions in Georgia and helped save lives. Moscow's spurious allegations deserve no consideration in this Council.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

*) Corr.1 only due to different distribution status, text remains unchanged