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**STATEMENT BY MR. DMITRY BALAKIN,  
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN  
FEDERATION, AT THE 1199<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 November 2018

**In response to the report by Ambassador Lamberto Zannier,  
OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities**

Mr. Chairperson,  
High Commissioner,

We are pleased to welcome you once again to the Permanent Council. You recently visited the Russian Federation for the first time in your capacity as High Commissioner, a visit we consider useful for the furtherance of dialogue on topical issues. It is important for you to continue to be one of the advocates promoting democratic values and inter-ethnic harmony in the OSCE area. We note your contribution to the Second International Conference on Combating Anti-Semitism, Racism and Xenophobia in Moscow.

As we all know, the office of the High Commissioner was established in 1992 at a time when observance of the rights of national minorities in Europe had deteriorated considerably in the course of the geopolitical changes taking place. There was a great need then for the mechanism of “quiet diplomacy”, including the task of early warning of conflicts and prompt action to prevent the escalation of inter-ethnic tension into conflict. A whole set of commitments and important expertise has been elaborated over the past 25 years, on which the future not only of the individual countries but also of the OSCE area as a whole depends in many ways.

The current reality demonstrates not only that the relevance of these tasks has not diminished but that it has in fact considerably grown. We are seeing an increase in a number of countries of dangerous trends in anti-Semitism, nationalism, chauvinism and other forms of racial and religious intolerance. There is blatant hate propaganda, activity by radicals and neo-Nazis and persistent efforts to split societies on nationalist and linguistic grounds. We see this as a direct threat to fundamental democratic values and human rights and a serious challenge to international and regional security and stability.

We are not the only ones to speak about this. On 25 October, the European Parliament adopted a resolution “On the rise of neo-fascist violence in Europe”. This illustrates the fact that in the European Union and, it is to be hoped, beyond its borders, an awareness is finally

taking shape of the extreme seriousness of the threat posed by the renaissance of Nazism, hate speech and other negative manifestations.

High Commissioner,

We should like to thank you for your interesting report. It confirms that the protection of national minorities and ethnic groups in the OSCE area is an extremely acute issue.

The situation in Ukraine gives considerable cause for concern. We agree about the importance of safeguarding the rights of national communities so that they can retain their identity. Through their government strategy, the authorities in that country effectively discriminate against national communities and violate their international commitments. The Russian-speaking population is particularly affected by this. In that regard, we welcome your efforts regarding the need for Ukraine to follow up the conclusion by the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, which called for the amending of the discriminatory Article 7 of the Law on Education.

We have taken note of your comments on the adoption by the Verkhovna Rada at the first reading of the Law on Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language. We do not agree that for the Ukrainian authorities "the key challenge is to find an appropriate balance in promoting the role of the Ukrainian language as a tool for integration, while at the same time protecting and promoting minority languages." What kind of "balance" is intended, in a situation of complete linguistic cleansing, which in the meaning of the law affects all areas of life, including social interaction?

All this is taking place against a background of tolerance by the Ukrainian authorities of manifestations of xenophobia, aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism. Attacks on the historical and cultural heritage in Ukraine have been going on for some years. The history of the country is being rewritten to align it with the political situation, and dissidents are being persecuted.

We are therefore once again obliged to state the need for urgent measures to prevent a further escalation of the situation. We look forward to hearing your concrete proposals and plan of action for this problem, all the more so since the actions by the Ukrainian Government are at variance with a whole set of recommendations and guidelines elaborated by the office of the High Commissioner.

The joint seminar on statelessness held yesterday in Vienna by the OSCE and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees confirmed the continued existence in Latvia and Estonia of the disgraceful phenomenon of "non-citizens". A significant portion of the population suffers from segregation on ethnic or linguistic grounds. The discrimination against national minorities in business and the labour market, and the restrictions on the Russian language in the media and education are covered up.

This is confirmed by the recent concluding statements about Latvia by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which pointed out the unacceptability of discrimination or the restriction of the rights of ethnic minorities to access to education and employment.

The situation of the Serbian population of Kosovo and Metohija demands the continuing attention of the High Commissioner. We firmly believe that without reliable guarantees of their rights and the creation in the territory of an atmosphere of genuine inter-ethnic harmony, the long-standing international efforts to resolve the Kosovan crisis are doomed to failure.

Unfortunately, these problems are not always duly reflected in the work of the relevant OSCE executive structures. We call on the High Commissioner to set an example by reacting promptly to these challenges within the framework of his mandate.

Thank you for your attention.