

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 967th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 October 2013

Regarding freedom of the media in Lithuania

Mr. Chairperson,

Attention has been drawn in Moscow to the fact that the Russian-language First Baltic television channel has stopped broadcasting after a documentary report on the events of 1991 in one of its programmes. The programme presented a version different from the official one of the assault on the television tower in Vilnius in which civilians were killed. As we see it, an investigation has been started into a charge of violation of a well-known Lithuanian law that provides for criminal sanctions on ideological grounds.

We regard this as an attempt to eradicate any opinion diverging from the officially implanted version of recent historical events. Unfortunately, the suspension of broadcasting by the television channel is the latest but by no means the only example of prosecuting dissent in this country.

We share the concern expressed by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media at the decision by the Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission, which in essence undermines the principle of media pluralism.

The representatives of Lithuania, which currently holds the presidency of the European Union, have frequently advocated unconditional respect for the fundamental right of individuals to free and unrestricted access to all information and have spoken up in favour of freedom of expression and the media. Unfortunately, when this applies to events in their own country, a completely different approach prevails.

No one present can contest that the right to freedom of expression is a basic human right and one of the fundamental elements of a democratic society. The commitments of States to observe this important right for every human being run like a leitmotif through United Nations, Council of Europe and OSCE documents.

Like any other country, Russia recognizes the importance of establishing the conditions for free development of the individual, public access to information and the right to freedom of expression, including in the media. In the twentieth century the peoples of our

country went through a difficult period in which dissent from the official point of view was severely punished. It is for this very reason that we are seriously concerned by the warning signals of a growing campaign to prosecute dissent in Lithuania, especially one that has legal backing.

Thank you for your attention.