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**STATEMENT BY  
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1407th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 January 2023

**On gross violations of freedom of the media by some Western OSCE  
participating States**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are compelled to draw attention once again to the continuing attack in some OSCE participating States on one of the fundamental freedoms, namely freedom of the media.

Over the past few years, Western alliance countries have consistently pursued a policy of restricting access to Russian media and information sources. The harassment of unwelcome journalists who offer different political narratives from that of the collective West is in a similar vein. Last year, this paranoid struggle against imaginary enemies culminated in the implementation of total censorship, the manifestations of which are multifaceted and include pervasive harassment of reporters, stripping them of their accreditation, pinning derogatory labels on them and banning them from attending official events. All this goes against the countries' international obligations, not to mention the inconsistency of such behaviour with common sense.

The European Union lightly sacrifices respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for opportunistic reasons. In mid-December 2022, the Council of the European Union adopted a ninth package of sanctions against Russia, under which four more Russian television channels – NTV/NTV World, Rossiya 1, REN TV and Channel One – were included in the list of sanctioned organizations. Pursuant to Article 4(g) of Council Decision 2014/512/CFSP and Article 2(f) of Council Regulation (EU) No. 833/2014, operators are prohibited from broadcasting, enabling, facilitating or otherwise contributing to the broadcasting of any content produced by the media listed in the said annexes.<sup>1</sup> Thus, under the made-up pretext of combating “propaganda”, the European Union is actively pursuing a policy of restricting access by citizens to information, including the receipt of information from alternative sources.

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<sup>1</sup> Including through transmission or distribution by any means such as cable, satellite or Internet Protocol television, or through Internet service providers, video sharing platforms or applications, whether new or pre-installed. Any broadcasting licence or authorization and transmission or distribution contracts and agreements with said media are to be suspended. Advertising of products and services in any content produced or broadcast by the media listed in the said annexes is prohibited.

Unfortunately, owing to the destructive position of the former Polish OSCE Chairmanship, political censorship and gross violations of OSCE commitments in the field of freedom of the media have also occurred within our Organization. Poland first issued and then, without giving any reasons, cancelled the accreditation of journalists from the Russian news agencies Rossiya Segodnya and TASS for the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Łódź on 1 and 2 December 2022. This was done, as usual, without explanation.

The information and socio-political sphere continues to be purged of dissenting opinions in the Republic of Moldova. Last December, the authorities banned six Russian-language television channels, including First in Moldova, RTR Moldova, Accent TV, TV6 and Orhei TV, from broadcasting. It is worth noting that the revocation of the channels' licences was not initiated by a court order or because of any irregularities. It was sanctioned by the Moldovan Government's Commission for Emergency Situations. These media outlets were accused of allegedly manipulating public opinion and of inaccurate coverage of national events and the situation in Ukraine. We regard the actions of the Moldovan Government as an affront to the principle of media pluralism and a flagrant violation of the right to freedom of access to information, not to mention a cynical infringement of the rights of national minorities.

We note the silence of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Teresa Ribeiro, who does not notice or does not wish to notice how freedom of speech is being suppressed in Moldova. It is not hard to imagine what kind of rhetoric would be heard in our Organization if something like this happened in Russia or Belarus – although the double standards in the Representative's work have, frankly, ceased to surprise us.

There is no end in sight to the crackdown on professional journalism in the Baltic States. On 3 January, Marat Kasem, editor-in-chief of the Sputnik Lithuania portal, was arrested in Riga. On 5 January, the court ordered him to be remanded in custody. The journalist is accused of violating the EU sanctions regime (Section 84 [of the Criminal Law] provides for punishment in the form of deprivation of liberty for a period of up to four years).

The Latvian authorities have thus once again demonstrated that the values of a democratic society, such as media pluralism and journalists' rights, are meaningless to them. We demand that the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Ms. Ribeiro, who is usually extremely concerned about the safety of journalists, including their legal rights, finally do her part to stop the repressions being carried out by the Latvian regime. Moreover, one of the main functions of this executive structure is "to concentrate ... on rapid response to serious non-compliance with OSCE principles and commitments by participating States in respect of freedom of expression and free media". We have never seen anything of the kind from Ms. Ribeiro.

This is not the only invidious example of an attack on freedom of speech in Latvia. The case of the well-known Latvian journalist Yuri Alekseev and his IMHOclub colleagues Dmitry Sustretov and Pyotr Pogorodny has been going on for more than three years. The Internet site they set up and moderate has long been a serious irritant and the subject of particular scrutiny by the intelligence services. Back in 2018, a criminal investigation was initiated against Mr. Alekseev and his colleagues, and charges were brought under Section 80 of the Criminal Law "Action directed against the Republic of Latvia by an organized group", punishable by imprisonment for five to fifteen years. The investigation was deliberately drawn out and went on for several years. Only recently was the case taken to court. It is worth noting that the Latvian intelligence services have no complaints about the content of the portal itself.

The Estonian authorities are not lagging far behind, and the dangerous practice of using punitive justice to suppress dissent is commonplace. On 7 December, it was reported on social media that

Aleksandr Kornilov, editor-in-chief of the information portal Baltija.eu and member of the Co-ordination Council of Russian Compatriots in Estonia, had had his residence permit revoked and been banned from entering the Schengen area for five years. He was branded as “a Kremlin activist, a link in Russia’s influence network”. His audience was warned that “serving Russia’s politics of division will have consequences”. In other words, we are talking effectively about intimidation by the official authorities.

Undoubtedly, the repression of this activist by the Estonian authorities is also due to his activities to protect the country’s Russian and Russian-speaking population. The portal he runs has consistently made the case for an alternative point of view on sensitive political subjects. By the way, Sputnik Media and the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda in Northern Europe* had previously been forced to stop operating in the country because of the excessive surveillance.

The establishment of a system of total information censorship in Ukraine has also failed to arouse the interest of the OSCE and the Western masters of the Kyiv regime. By remaining silent on this fact, they once again demonstrate their adherence to double standards and their functioning on the principle *Quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi* (what is permissible for Jupiter is not permissible for a bull).

The adoption by Ukraine in December 2022 of the notorious Media Act, which has been severely criticized by the professional community, has gone unnoticed in our Organization. A press release from the International Federation of Journalists noted that “the law does not envisage the regulation of the media sphere, but in fact, the establishment of relations of subordination, when the media come under the control of the authorities.” In the press release, the reporters also called upon the Ukrainian Government to “rewrite the law and open a discussion with journalists’ organizations and the media”, arguing that “there cannot be a democracy without independent journalism.”

These are just a few examples of violations of media freedom in Western countries. Other cases and also examples of the way the rights of the Russian and Russian-speaking population are being trampled upon can be found in the December report by the Moscow Bureau for Human Rights “Violation of the rights of citizens of the Russian Federation and people with Russian heritage abroad in 2022”.

To sum up, the Western-centric part of the OSCE area has effectively established an information space that is fully controlled by the authorities and subject to military censorship rules, where any alternative viewpoints are persecuted in one way or another. Western countries are directly responsible for the fragmentation of the infosphere and also for the total disregard for the universal principles of freedom of speech and freedom of expression. For this reason they have no right to criticize other States, either within the OSCE or elsewhere. Media freedom is already “burning on the bonfire of a new witch-hunt”, and the information “Inquisition” is gaining momentum.

There is no point in calling upon these participating States to stop disregarding their media freedom commitments. Nor is there any point in appealing to the current heads of the Organization’s specialist executive structures, first and foremost Ms. Ribeiro, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, to start reacting to what is happening within the framework of their respective mandates. We take note of this situation and will draw appropriate conclusions for the human dimension, while continuing to put in place mechanisms to protect against hostile Western propaganda, whose main purpose is to demonize Russia, its leadership and its people. We will use other mechanisms at our disposal to safeguard the interests of Russian media or those journalists who are not yet afraid to raise their voices in opposition to the attitudes imposed by the United States of America and its satellites.

Thank you for your attention.