

PC.DEL/292/14
14 March 2014

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 989th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 March 2014

**In response to the report by Ambassador Janez Lenarčič,
Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Lenarčič,

We should like to welcome you to this Permanent Council meeting and thank you for the detailed report on the activities of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and its future plans. The ODIHR's expertise is required not only in the countries to the east of Vienna but increasingly also in those to the west.

First of all, let us turn to the ODIHR's work on elections. The ODIHR has recently had a good opportunity to demonstrate its depoliticized approach, professionalism and impartiality in observing the referendum to be held in Crimea on 16 March. Unfortunately, this opportunity has been wasted. If a constructive approach had been taken, this would have helped to reduce tension and stabilize the situation in the region as a whole.

We trust that the ODIHR mission to assess the human rights situation in Ukraine will display impartiality and objectivity. In that connection, the mission's attention should not be limited to Crimea alone, despite the signals to that effect coming from our partners. It is essential also to monitor closely the situation in other regions where armed "Maidan activists" are operating freely. We are willing to provide Mr. Lenarčič with a dossier of crimes committed by nationalist forces in Ukraine, which could prove useful in the mission's work. I would be interested to hear more detailed information regarding the plans and modalities for its work.

We support the ODIHR's aspiration to observe elections in all of the OSCE participating States. Unfortunately, the focus remains skewed towards the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, with hundreds of observers being sent to monitor elections there.

The comparative analysis by the ODIHR of electoral legislation in OSCE countries has enabled us to identify common problems and examples of best practices with regard to elections. This work should be continued and a seminar organized this year to evaluate the

ODIHR's election observation methodology, which would help in the drawing up of uniform rules for election observation on a collective basis.

We commend the ODIHR's practical steps to promote OSCE commitments on freedom of movement. We trust that the Office's study of cross-border movement and the organization of a corresponding seminar in May of this year will enable us to conduct a useful exchange of experience regarding the simplification of visa formalities. A comparative analysis of the visa laws in OSCE participating States would be a logical follow-up to that study. The inclusion of such a task in the ODIHR's planned work would be entirely in keeping with the OSCE commitments to simplifying visa regimes, enabling examples to be provided of better legislation and effective practice.

The Office's work on combating intolerance and discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality or religion is particularly relevant. The unprecedented rise in manifestations of racism, xenophobia, religious intolerance, aggressive nationalism, neo-Nazism and violent extremism calls for a strengthening of the capacity of States to respond appropriately to these challenges.

We welcome the Office's intention to promote educational and other projects aimed at increasing awareness of the historical lessons of the twentieth century, in particular on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Berlin Declaration on combating anti-Semitism and the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, which will be commemorated next year.

We agree that the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area remains one of the most difficult problems. However, the violation of the rights of other ethnic and linguistic minorities requires no less attention. Combining the different tools employed in the work of the ODIHR and the High Commissioner on National Minorities will strengthen the overall effect of this work.

Advancing the involvement of women in political, economic and public life should not be at the expense of safeguarding the rights of those women who choose family and the raising of children as their main occupation. It is important to remember the special role of women and mothers in upholding traditional family, moral, religious and cultural values.

We welcome the Office's activities regarding the rule of law. We note the importance of continuing close monitoring of trials of Guantánamo prisoners. We trust that the ODIHR's analysis and assessments will help to influence the United States authorities in deciding to at last fulfil their promise to close down this sinister prison.

In reply to the constant appeals by a number of delegations for the "independence and autonomy" of the ODIHR, we should like to stress that we cannot go along with this concept. The work of all the executive structures, including the ODIHR, should be based exclusively on the provisions of their mandate and on the instructions given by the collective bodies. The ODIHR's budgetary and extrabudgetary activities cannot be allowed to exceed the framework of existing OSCE commitments and decisions or instructions adopted on the basis of consensus.

At the same time, other issues of relevance to our Organization, in particular the safeguarding of economic, social and cultural rights, remain outside the Office's field of vision. We hope that the ODIHR will be able to prepare without undue haste for the third

supplementary meeting at the end of October 2014 and ensure that these aspects are reflected appropriately in the agenda of the meeting.

Given that this is your last report to the Permanent Council on the activities of the ODIHR, we should like to thank you sincerely for the work you have done as its Director. We have great respect for your work in this post. We understand perfectly well the difficulties and problems that you have encountered. However things may have looked, Russia has always had as its goal constructive co-operation with the ODIHR within the framework of its mandate. This will continue to be our approach in the future.

We wish you, Mr. Lenarčič, every success in your future endeavours.

Thank you for your attention.