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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 985th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 February 2014

**In response to the address by Mr. Nils Muižnieks,
Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Muižnieks,

Thank you for your interesting and informative statement.

Russia greatly appreciates the co-operation with you and your Office. We share the basic principles on which you base your work: political neutrality, objectivity, deep respect for human rights issues and a rejection of double standards.

This is also the approach that we take. Russia has never asked for it to be spared criticism. We make no attempt to conceal the problems that exist in our country and are doing everything possible to overcome them. We advocate mutually respectful dialogue in this sensitive area.

The principal areas of your work, namely fostering education in and awareness of human rights, promoting effective observance of fundamental freedoms and human rights by all of the Council of Europe member countries and providing advice on the prevention of human rights violations, have much in common with the OSCE's human rights mandate. At the same time, the Commissioner is a non-judicial institution and does not take up individual complaints but instead studies the observance of human rights in a comprehensive manner and from the point of view of compliance with international commitments.

We carefully follow your quarterly reports and comments. We consider them to be extremely important and useful in helping to understand the gravity of the present-day threats and challenges, including those in the OSCE area. We note the close attention you pay to the rise of racism, extremism and radical nationalistic sentiments, including the glorification of former Nazi and fascist henchmen in the Baltic States.

We share your concern regarding the discrimination against ethnic minorities, migrants and asylum seekers. We support your repeated calls for Latvia and Estonia to grant

the children of non-citizens automatic citizenship, thus putting a stop to the process of self-perpetuating statelessness in these countries.

Your assessments of restrictions by the European Union on freedom of movement in Europe are extremely important in our opinion. They enable us to gain a better understanding of the problems in this area, among other things with a view to furthering dialogue on the implementation of the relevant OSCE commitments.

We share your concern at the situation regarding the rule of law, access to justice, ensuring the independence of the judicial system, and preventing unlawful detention and the use of torture. We note, in particular, your recent article entitled “Time for accountability in CIA torture cases” about the situation surrounding the CIA’s secret prison programme. We support your appeal to the European countries affected by this scandal to take the necessary measures to ensure that the persons responsible for these violations of human rights and freedoms are brought to justice. In this connection, the examples of Italy, Germany and Sweden where specific steps have been taken to identify and punish the perpetrators are significant.

We commend your dialogue with national human rights institutions and human rights activists during your visits to different countries. We firmly believe that human rights activities should not be exempt from responsibility, and individual freedom cannot be placed above human values. The principle of a balance between rights and commitments vis-à-vis the State is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights.

As for the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), Russia is engaged in constructive co-operation with the Directorate of the Council of Europe Secretariat to monitor the execution of ECHR judgements and also with the European Court. The reduction in the number of complaints regarding Russia examined by the ECHR testifies to the seriousness of the efforts being made by our country to improve the human rights situation. According to figures for 2013, the number of cases regarding Russia fell by 41 per cent, while the overall number of complaints submitted to the court is down by 20 per cent.

We believe that the work of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, which is based on a depoliticized and objective approach to the human rights situation in a given country, can in many respects serve as an example for the OSCE institutions. We trust that you will demonstrate this same considered and balanced approach in your work on Ukraine as well.

In conclusion, let me wish you, Mr. Muižnieks, every success in your noble and challenging mission.

Thank you for your attention.