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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1434th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

20 July 2023

On the anniversary of the crash of flight MH17

Mr. Chairperson,

Nine years ago, on 17 July 2014, a Boeing 777 aircraft belonging to Malaysia Airlines that was flying on the MH17 route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur crashed in Donbas. All 298 people on board the aircraft were killed in this disaster.

The Russian Federation has on several occasions and at various levels expressed its sincere condolences to the victims' families and loved ones. To our great regret, the high degree of politicization of this tragedy by certain countries is preventing to this day a comprehensive, thorough and truly independent international investigation from being conducted, as called for notably by United Nations Security Council resolution 2166.

Our country's consistent position has not changed over the years. Russia from the very outset wanted to take an active part in the investigation. However, that did not happen. In contrast, Ukraine, which did not close the airspace over its territory during a conflict, was invited to form part of the Joint Investigation Team. Malaysia, the owner of the aircraft, was not invited until somewhat later, specifically once the Australians, the Dutch and the Malaysians had agreed among themselves that anything adopted by that team would have to be adopted by consensus. This means that Ukraine had veto power over the investigation.

The way in which the circumstances of the tragedy were reviewed and the course of the legal proceedings initiated in the Netherlands both tell of a desire to make the findings fit the political assessments and strident statements made in Western capitals immediately after the aircraft crashed. Russia had been pronounced guilty in advance. For within a few hours, if not minutes, as if on cue, the media and then Western political figures began hurling accusations at Russia and its leadership, blaming them for the loss of life. The entire work of the investigators was forced into the Procrustean mould of these political directives. It is not surprising that they, in effect, ignored the Russian radar data made available to the Netherlands, along with documentation showing that the missile which hit the Boeing belonged to Ukraine and was launched from territory controlled by the Ukrainian Government.

We recall that the Russian defence concern Almaz-Antey, the manufacturer of the Buk anti-aircraft missile system, conducted live-fire tests on three occasions to model the scenario of an aircraft being downed in the skies over Donbas. These tests were based on data collected in the course of more than forty years of use of anti-aircraft missiles of this type. They confirmed that flight MH17 could only have been downed by a 9M38 missile launched from territory controlled by the Ukrainian military, who were equipped with Buk systems. It is also worth pointing out here that, according to the lawyers of one of the defendants, even the Dutch public prosecution service has acknowledged that it was technically possible for the aircraft to have been downed by a missile fired from a Buk system from the positions of the Ukrainian armed forces. But this version was simply brushed aside.

Instead, the “evidence base” rested on dubious sources of information: the testimony of anonymous witnesses, social media, poor-quality photographs, certain audiovisual materials with clear signs of having been produced through montage, unsubstantiated data from the Ukrainian intelligence services, and investigations by some supposedly “independent” bloggers.

Moreover, during the investigation and then the trial, the key question was never clarified as to how possibly could the Boeing on flight MH17 end up flying over the zone of hostilities when the Ukrainian Government’s punitive operation against the population of Donbas was in full swing. Why did Ukraine, which threw its military might, including combat aircraft, at the towns and cities of Donbas, not close its airspace to civil aviation at the same time? The Ukrainian Government itself, by the way, has yet to make available the data from its own radars, while the US Government has still not handed over the satellite images on which, so the Americans claim, one can see the exact moment of the missile launch. All this suggests that someone stood to benefit from the fact that the Boeing was in the skies over Donbas at that particular moment in time, and that persistent attempts are being made to conceal the truth of what happened.

We would point out that, in the context of the ongoing Russian special military operation, a number of States have sought to make use of political pressure to create the anti-Russian information atmosphere that they need in relation to the tragedy of flight MH17. In that regard, the technical investigation by the Dutch Safety Board and the criminal investigation by the Joint Investigation Team did not meet the requirements indicated in United Nations Security Council resolution 2166, including the need for “a full, thorough and independent international investigation”. The real objective, by all appearances, was not to establish the truth but to get the evidence base to “fit” the version about Russia’s involvement in the tragedy.

We note that the MH17 crash has become simply a major component of a mendacious and baseless anti-Russian campaign. It is the same with the fake stories about Bucha, Irpin, Borodyanka, Kramatorsk, Mariupol and so on. The tactic has not changed. For example, even though video footage showing the Ukrainian serial number of the Tochka-U missile used to shell the Kramatorsk railway station on 8 April 2022 was published shortly afterwards by Italian journalists, the Permanent Representative of the United States of America continued to repeat, in this room last week, the hackneyed propaganda about the shelling of the Kramatorsk station having been carried out by Russian troops. Our opponents are not interested in the truth. All that matters to them is to have a pretext for groundlessly vilifying our country.

With regard to flight MH17, we reiterate that Russia has provided a tremendous amount of information that is of great importance for establishing the real causes of the crash. However, none of the facts presented were taken into account in the investigation or by the District Court of The Hague. The approach chosen there was to promote and cater to a pre-prepared political agenda that intentionally ruled out the possibility of identifying the real culprits behind the tragedy of flight MH17.

Thank you for your attention.