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**STATEMENT BY MR. PAVEL KNYAZEV,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 919th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 July 2012

**In response to the concerns of the United States delegation regarding the
draft legislation on non-commercial organizations**

Madam Chairperson,

In connection with the question raised by the United States delegation at today's meeting of the Permanent Council regarding the proposed changes to the Russian laws on the activities of non-commercial organizations (NCOs), we should like to make the following comments.

Last week, a group of deputies from the United Russia parliamentary group did in fact submit draft legislation to the State Duma amending the Federal Law on Non-Commercial Organizations and the Federal Law on the Procedure for the Formation and Use of Specific Capital of Non-Commercial Organizations.

The proposed draft legislation makes provision for ensuring greater transparency in the work of non-commercial organizations engaged in political activities in Russia but funded from abroad. They will be obliged to conduct an annual audit of accounts, to publish a report every six months and to make reference to their status in all material they disseminate. They will be liable to a fine if they fail to provide or distort this information.

Over 230,000 NCOs are operating in Russia. However, according to experts, these amendments will affect only a limited number of registered non-commercial organizations (about 1,000). We should like to underscore once again that the proposed changes in no way prohibit the activities or infringe the rights of non-governmental organizations, and are intended to ensure transparency in their work and make information on their sources of financing open to all Russian citizens.

In that connection, this draft legislation is by and large in keeping with similar legal norms that currently exist in foreign legislation. For example, the term "foreign agent" used in the draft has been borrowed from American legislation, namely the Foreign Agents Registration Act, which the distinguished representative of the United States mentioned today.

The draft legislation will be submitted for its first reading in the State Duma on 6 July. There will be three readings in total. At the same time, it is being widely discussed in Russian civil society and in the media. Various assessments and views are being heard, which will of course be taken into account by the lawmakers.

Accordingly, the broad discussion of this legislative initiative is just beginning. This being the case, we fail to understand the concern being expressed already at this stage by certain delegations regarding a law that has not yet been adopted. We take the view that any change to a law is the prerogative of the legislative authorities of the sovereign countries of the OSCE and any external attempts to interfere in this process are counter-productive. We trust that the United States delegation will bear this in mind, just like our colleagues from the other delegations.

Thank you for your attention.