



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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Statement on “Restriction of the freedom of expression, assembly and association in the Russian Federation”

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1139th meeting of the Permanent Council,
30 March 2017

Mr. Chairman,

Ukraine aligned itself with the statement of the European Union, which we fully support. We also would like to add some remarks in national capacity.

Ukraine consistently underscores its deep concern over the human rights situation in Russia and its significant departure in the past years from implementation of respective OSCE commitments. As repeatedly stated, there is a direct link between the internal oppression of human rights and freedoms in Russia and the external aggression of this country. The presence of this link re-emphasises the enduring relevance and validity of the OSCE comprehensive concept of security which relates the maintenance of peace to the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Russia's steep regress in the area of respect for human rights is registered and documented by numerous authoritative international non-governmental organizations. In particular, the recent report of the Amnesty International concluded that “restrictions on rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly increased”.

One can hardly expect that the Russian citizens will be able to freely assemble and express their views on continuing Russia's hybrid warfare against Ukraine at a time when they are denied this right even to speak about the rising costs of living and rampant corruption in high political echelons of the country. Notably, a recent poll from the Moscow Higher School of Economics has revealed that as many as 41 percent of Russians struggle to feed their families, while the World Bank estimates that 21,4 mln Russian people have income below the national poverty line. But the Russian state-run propaganda media did not notice last Sunday's rallies against corruption throughout the country and the detention of peaceful Russian citizens for merely assembling in some locations in the cities.

It is important that despite the environment of the authorities' clamp-down on human rights and freedoms in Russia, numerous members of the civil society and professional community show resolve to defend their human rights. They need support and solidarity of the international community. 10 members of the Council on Civil Society Development and Human Rights under the President of the Russian

Federation released their public statement pointing out to the unfounded denials of the right to peaceful assembly, abuse by the authorities of their powers and unwillingness to grant equal political opportunities to their opponents, short-sightedness of instigation of clashes between the citizens, exercising their Constitutional right, and the police, executing the orders. The prevailing majority of the detained citizens did not behave aggressively or take any action that could endanger the public order. Members of the Council have emphasized that the number of the detained citizens, which had exceeded one thousand in one day of 26 March 2017, is unprecedented in the last decades. Against this background the comments by the Russian police generals about “loyal and minimal” reaction of their subordinates can only further aggravate concerns regarding the direction in which the Russian authorities have chosen to move the country.

In this context we remind the Russian Federation of the agreed OSCE commitments and responsibility to uphold them as adherence to these commitments provides the basis for participation and co-operation in the organisation. We further remind the Russian Federation that the guiding principles and common values of the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris embody the responsibilities of States towards each other and of governments towards their people. In the current worrying circumstances we encourage the Russian Federation to consider inviting an OSCE Human Rights Assessment Mission to thoroughly examine the situation and elaborate respective recommendations in line with the OSCE commitments and international standards. In the meantime, we encourage the OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE autonomous Institutions to use all available assets and instruments to monitor and react to the developments in Russia.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.