

PC.DEL/1682/16  
2 December 2016

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1121st MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 December 2016

**In response to the report by the  
OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Ms. Mijatović,

We thank you for your detailed report as usual and your analysis of some of the problems in the OSCE area. We note your efforts to promote freedom and pluralism of the media in participating States, to give citizens free access to different sources of information, to protect journalists and to ensure safe working conditions, including in areas of armed conflicts.

We welcome the work on developing ethical standards and self-regulation of the media, which should not be confused with self-censorship. This is not only a necessary condition for responsible and quality journalism but also an important element in the fight against hate propaganda.

We note the Office's attention to the Internet and new information technologies and their relevance to freedom of the media. We believe, however, that non-agreed terms concerning the virtual space should not be automatically carried over into the OSCE's commitments. As you know, some States are attempting to impose their idea of equality of online and offline rights. We do not agree with this distinction in the application of human rights and freedoms. The Internet is merely a means of communication, as were the telegraph, telephone, radio and television in their day. The right to receive, impart and exchange information and opinions using any means of communication is explicitly stated in key international human rights instruments. At the same time, by no means all human rights and freedoms are covered. For example, it is impossible to ensure online the right to food, housing, freedom of movement, a favourable environment and others. We urge a sensible approach to things.

The hysteria developing in some countries regarding the Russian media needs to be looked at separately. They are accused of some kind of "State propaganda" as a pretext for imposing harsh and restrictive measures. One typical example is the resolution adopted by the

European Parliament on 23 November on European Union strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties, which explicitly sets itself the task of opposing Russian media. This is an attempt to punish them for broadcasting an objective point of view that the authorities consider undesirable, which is in fundamental conflict with the OSCE's democratic principles and commitments. We already raised this issue at the last Permanent Council meeting and received a most unsatisfactory reply from the European Union representative.

The arbitrary labelling of media as the “mouthpiece of propaganda” serves as justification for exerting pressure, suspending broadcasts, closures and other restrictive measures contrary to the norms of international law. Ms. Mijatović has repeatedly emphasized that propaganda, if indeed that is what it is, should be opposed by presenting other points of view for the public to judge. This is achieved by guaranteeing diverse sources of information and free access to them and not by prohibitions and primitive mud-slinging. However, we continue to hear the tired rubber-stamped phrases and aggressive rhetoric of the Cold War – in other words, the same propaganda. This won't get us anywhere.

There are problems with freedom of expression and freedom of the media practically throughout the entire OSCE area. We have drawn the attention of the Permanent Council on several occasions to the persecution of journalists in Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, the Czech Republic and other European Union countries. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media has also spoken frequently of them. However, not once have we heard concerns about the situation in these countries being expressed by the representatives of the United States of America and the Member States of the European Union. We have here a case of double standards.

For its part, Russia will continue to pay particular attention to the protection of journalists and media pluralism. We have submitted a draft on this issue for the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Hamburg.

Mr. Chairperson,

I am obliged to respond to the statements by the representatives of the European Union, the United States of America and Ukraine.

We shall discuss the question of Ukraine again in detail today. I should like merely to say that we have given repeated explanations about the case of Roman Sushchenko. He is being detained not for journalistic activities, which he was not officially carrying out, but for espionage.

I should now like to turn to the Federal Law on Combating Extremist Activity, the application of which the representative of the United States of America has complained about. The Law was adopted in 2002 and amended in 2016 to protect human rights and freedoms and the basic principles of the constitutional system and safeguard the integrity and security of the Russian Federation. Articles 8, 11 and 12 of the Law are relevant to our discussion. They deal with the inadmissibility of disseminating extremist material via the media and their use for extremist activities, media responsibility for the dissemination of extremist material, and the inadmissibility of using public communications networks for extremist activities. The substance is clear. The Law is not in any way discriminatory. The

cases mentioned by our colleagues regarding specific citizens, including Nicholas Semeny, need to be considered in the context of this Law.

By the way, the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights were taken into account in the drafting of the Law and the amendments to it, in particular Article 20, which states that “any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.” I should like to remind our distinguished US colleague that, unlike Russia, the United States of America and a number of other Western countries acceded with reservations to this Article and to the Covenant as a whole.

If the dissemination of such ideas is normal according to the legislation of other countries, including the United States of America, that is their choice. Russia has taken a different path, adhering strictly to its commitments under universal international documents.

I should also like to remind you that the United States is elaborating national plans for countering foreign propaganda and disinformation as part of a comprehensive strategy to combat foreign disinformation. Proponents of so-called “Euro-Atlantic solidarity” are forming propaganda structures like the East StratCom Task Force, creating barriers to the dissemination of alternative points of view in countries adjacent to Russia.

The number of mechanisms of this nature is only growing. In the United States of America there is the Center for European Policy Analysis, in Riga the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, or StratCom COE. A number of OSCE participating States are involved in these structures, continuing under the pretext of combating “aggressive Russian propaganda” to cleanse their media space of alternative points of view. All of this is contrary to international norms, the principles of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and other OSCE commitments.

Mr. Chairperson,

In conclusion, we should like to thank Ms. Mijatović for her energetic work and emphasize our willingness to continue constructive co-operation with the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Thank you for your attention.