



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA TO THE UN,  
OSCE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

**Statement by Ambassador Nils Jansons, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Latvia, delivered in response to the statement by the Russian Federation**

Permanent Council No 799,  
Vienna, March 19, 2010

Mr. Chairman,

The issue brought up by the Russian Ambassador has been discussed in the OSCE before, and I can refer colleagues back to my statement last year (PC.DEL/181/09). But let me offer some clarifications at this time for the benefit of colleagues.

What took place in Latvia on 16<sup>th</sup> of March was private remembrance of the war-dead by the veterans of the Latvian Legion, which was a front-line unit, and not promotion of any ideological views. Those that go to church or cemetery on that day have no political agenda whatsoever. They are simply paying their respects to their fathers, sons and friends who became tragic victims of a very costly and complicated war.

Let me recall that for Latvia the WWII was an especially tragic period, when the country was occupied three times – first by the Soviet Union, then by the Nazi Germany and then again by the Soviet Union. Against international conventions, the two invading armies forced Latvians to serve on both sides of the front. Many families in Latvia have a relative that has been involved. If they pay their respects to these relatives, it does not mean a glorification of a regime that has caused so much suffering to Latvia. The Latvian Legion was a front-line unit, which is why the US Commission on Displaced Persons in 1950 concluded that the Baltic Waffen SS units were separate and distinct in purpose, ideology, activities and qualifications for membership from the German SS.

The freedom of assembly and of expression is guaranteed in Latvia. Of course, it has to be exercised with due account to the requirements of public security, when a number of groups with clearly opposing views want to express themselves the same day, in the same place. While the Riga City Council declined to authorize the flower laying, as well as the picket against it, this decision was appealed in the Administrative Court, the ruling of which allowed both of these activities. The police acted effectively in preventing provocations and quickly isolating cases that risked exacerbating the situation.

Let me recall that Latvia has always condemned the crimes committed during the Second World War – the crimes of Nazism and Stalinism, the Holocaust and genocide, which do not and cannot have any perpetuity. Latvia also strongly condemns all kinds of extremism and radicalism, including anti-Semitism,

xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance. We believe that remembrance of war-dead should not be exploited by groups pursuing radical views or their supporters.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.