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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT THE  
2010 OSCE REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Warsaw, 4 October 2010

**Working session 3: Fundamental freedoms II, including: freedom of assembly and association; national human rights institutions and the role of civil society in the protection of human rights; freedom of movement**

Madam Chairperson,  
Esteemed colleagues,

The principal task of the OSCE is to create a single, indivisible and democratic space of freedom and security in the entire region stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok. This goal cannot be achieved without the enjoyment of one of the fundamental freedoms – the freedom of movement.

All OSCE participating States are bound by political commitments to ensure freedom of movement for citizens both within countries and between them, up to and including the total abolition of visa regimes.

The Russian Federation takes an extremely serious approach to the implementation of those commitments. They are in fact enshrined in the Russian Constitution. Article 27 of that basic law guarantees that anyone who is legally present on the territory of the Russian Federation has the right to move about freely and to select his or her place of sojourn and place of residence. That same article guarantees everyone the freedom to leave Russia and the right to return to it without hindrance. Foreign citizens have the right to freedom of movement for personal and business reasons within Russia in accordance with the federal Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens in the Russian Federation. The law makes an exception for territories and facilities that may be visited only with a special permit.

The Russian Federation is an active advocate of the liberalization of visa regimes between OSCE countries. Russia is engaged in negotiations with the European Union on the mutual abolition of visa requirements. It is our hope that in the foreseeable future citizens of Russia and the EU countries will be able to move about without impediment and without the constraints of visa requirements. We are convinced that this will have a positive effect on economic co-operation and on the development of scientific, cultural and sporting links and on contacts between people.

Regrettably, it cannot be said that the OSCE commitments on freedom of movement are being conscientiously met by all of the Organization's participating States. Some countries are not only not easing visa procedures, but are actually tightening them. On some occasions visa fees exceed the average monthly wage in a number of OSCE countries. The procedures for the review of applications and the issuance of visas frequently pose a barrier to legitimate movement by people rather than serving as a means of countering the threats of illegal migration and trafficking in human beings. These procedures cause business to suffer, the economy to suffer and people to suffer. There have been cases when visa procedures have prevented experts from attending events organized by the OSCE itself.

We regret that the agenda of our Organization pays very little attention to the subject of freedom of movement. This is not right. The Charter of Paris for a New Europe, whose twentieth anniversary we mark this year, proclaimed four freedoms – freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief; freedom of association; freedom of expression; and freedom of movement. While as far as the first three of these freedoms are concerned active work is taking place within the OSCE and compliance with them is being monitored, the commitments regarding freedom of movement and the easing of visa regimes remain, conversely, in the shadows. There is no way of understanding the justification for this kind of selective approach.

We call on all the OSCE countries to fulfil conscientiously their commitments with regard to freedom of movement and the liberalization of visa regimes. We call on the OSCE itself and on its executive structures, primarily the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), to institute permanent monitoring of the visa situation in the participating States.

We have set out during the “Corfu discussions” our proposals on how best to revive the OSCE commitments on freedom of movement. Last year, on the eve of the Ministerial Council meeting in Athens, together with other delegations we put forward the draft of a ministerial decision on that subject.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The subject of freedom of movement and visa regimes must return to the agenda of the OSCE. Annual human dimension events must be devoted to that subject. It must be dealt with by the ODIHR. We must speak about it at meetings of the Permanent Council. This subject must be reflected in the documents of the forthcoming OSCE summit meeting in Astana. We must reaffirm our commitments in this area and must conscientiously implement them, thereby assisting in the achievement of our common goal – the creation of a genuinely democratic security space in the region from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

Thank you for your attention.