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**STATEMENT BY
MR. DMITRY POLYANSKIY, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1558th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 March 2026

**In response to the report by the Director of the
OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

Madam Director,

We have carefully read the report presented by you. We welcome your stated commitment to dialogue and your openness to constructive criticism. In that regard, we should like to share some observations.

I should point out at once that we are unable to share the optimism of the appraisals we have heard here, primarily from representatives of the collective West, regarding the work of the OSCE executive structure at whose helm you stand. The claims about the “independence” and “autonomy” of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) that are regularly to be heard within these walls continue to be devoid of any objective basis. I would remind you that the Office’s work is defined by the decisions of our Organization’s decision-making bodies and by a mandate that has been approved by all the participating States. A fundamental point is that the ODIHR’s activities must not go beyond the scope of consensus-based documents and taskings. It is essential to enhance the transparency of the Office’s work and its accountability to the participating States. In connection with this, I would point out that, if there really is a genuine desire to rectify the imbalances and shortcomings that have built up, the ODIHR still has a long and difficult road to travel under your leadership. And there is not that much time left, given that you are already through almost half of your term of office. I would very much like to be able to say something comforting and positive, but unfortunately there are no grounds for that at the moment.

On the contrary, it has to be said that, despite demonstrable demand on the part of the participating States, the ODIHR’s approach has remained invariably partisan and politicized over many years. One gets the impression that the Office is operating by inertia, as it were, and ignoring the wide array of issues and tasks before it. What is more, the ODIHR continues, entirely without justification, to position itself as some sort of human rights “arbiter” across the entire OSCE area. It is doing something for which it has received neither approval nor authorization. Conversely, it shies away from truly important, pressing issues which are precisely the ones that require its expertise and a public response from it. We would emphasize that we regularly submit requests to the ODIHR regarding various relevant issues – we hope that some day we will actually receive a substantive response to them.

Madam Director,

We noticed that the draft of your report to the Permanent Council, which was circulated on 13 March, contains politicized anti-Russian remarks. This is unacceptable. The ODIHR's inability to refrain from churning out non-consensus, confrontational statements, including as regards the situation in Ukraine, testifies to the "bespoke" and provocative nature of the text prepared by your team. We are seeing how the agenda of a certain group of States is being advanced, which is utterly unacceptable both in the work of the OSCE itself and in that of its executive structures.

In addition, it has been announced that, as part of its "Ukraine Monitoring Initiative", the ODIHR is preparing yet another (the ninth to date) non-consensus report, based on the "testimonies" of hundreds of "witnesses and victims". We are obliged to reiterate that the ODIHR has no authority to consider matters relating to violations of international humanitarian law. We harbour no illusions as to either the veracity of the "evidence" on which such screeds are based or the methodology used to select the respondents. We would also recall that the ODIHR does not have a mandate to collect any data or witness testimonies regarding such violations. We urge that this be strictly kept in mind, and we reject in advance any "recommendations" of that sort from the aforementioned pseudo-studies.

At the same time, we expect the ODIHR to take a firm stand against the Kyiv regime's continued discriminatory measures, which are geared towards the flagrant and massive trampling of human rights and fundamental freedoms by Ukraine. Instead of attempting to divert the discussion towards lengthy disquisitions on the "relevance" of the OSCE and its human dimension, it is essential, in view of current realities, that the ODIHR should attend to what is stipulated by its mandate. And this happens to be such a case.

The Office claims to be seriously concerned about situations where NGO representatives and human rights defenders' groups have been facing increasing hostility. It is asserted that "[the] ODIHR's work with civil society remains paramount." Why, then, does the ODIHR merely throw up its hands in perplexity when faced with the Polish authorities' cancellation of the entry visas previously issued to those Russian community organizers who in 2025 had sought to attend the "Warsaw Human Dimension Conference"? We realize that it is convenient to blame everything on one's "domestic security regulations". However, it is unacceptable to forget about the obligations that the host country of an OSCE event undertakes in hosting such an event. That is precisely why Russia is raising the issue of moving our Organization's human dimension events to a location outside Poland, which uses visa leverage as a form of censorship to shut out "undesirable" voices and opinions.

Given that such situations keep recurring and no one even attempts to give a proper assessment of them, it stands to reason that the ODIHR is deliberately ignoring instances of harassment of non-governmental organizations that speak out on matters deemed inconvenient by the collective West. We believe that such a selective approach is unacceptable and that it makes a mockery of the very fact of the ODIHR continuing to have its headquarters in Warsaw.

One of the ODIHR's core fields of activity continues to be the observation of national elections in OSCE participating States. That makes sense, since, as is well known, this executive structure in its current form evolved out of the Office for Free Elections. However, the election monitoring carried out by the ODIHR is characterized by contradictory and biased approaches. The Office is even unable to stand up for its own observers when they are demonstratively shut out of participation in international missions established under the auspices of the OSCE (as happened to the team of Russian short-term observers shortly before the parliamentary election in Moldova in September 2025), with, again, the domestic security

regulations of States invoked as justification. Is it not time, then, to acknowledge the obvious, namely that all this so-called monitoring, conducted exclusively by observers deemed “suitable” and loyal to the host country, has become a complete sham, a smokescreen designed to legitimize those election results that suit the needs of the Western majority?

We are dealing here with the constant application of double standards in the deployment of ODIHR missions to countries “east” and “west of Vienna”, with partisanship, with one-sided, politicized assessments of electoral processes, and with the artificial segregation of States into “mature democracies” and those that supposedly have yet to prove their compliance with democratic election standards. This has caused the ODIHR to forfeit the trust of participating States. An increasing number of countries no longer regard it as an authoritative body in the realm of international election observation.

In many respects, this is also because it is unacceptable to be guided by non-consensus rules for election observation drawn up behind closed doors – the ODIHR’s so-called gold standard. We once again emphasize the need to develop an electoral methodology collectively agreed upon by all the OSCE participating States.

Madam Director,

A stocktaking of the principles and approaches underlying the operations of the executive structure headed by you has clearly been long overdue. Otherwise, the ODIHR will continue to operate within a “virtual reality” of its own making that bears no resemblance to actual reality. Perhaps that is in fact the task you have been set, but it is evident that the added value of such work by the ODIHR will continue to be close to nil. I would hope that you understand this.

Thank you for your attention.