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Delegation of Canada

**STATEMENT BY
AMBASSADOR VÉRONIQUE PEPIN-HALLÉ, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF CANADA TO THE OSCE, AT THE 1568th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 June 2026

The Russian Federation's ongoing aggression against Ukraine

Mr. Chair,

We draw the Permanent Council's attention to the continued unlawful detention by the Russian Federation of three OSCE officials Vadym Golda, Maksym Petrov, and Dmytro Shabanov.

Maksym Petrov served as an interpreter, and Vadym Golda and Dmytro Shabanov served as security assistants in the Special Monitoring Mission, or SMM.

All three were OSCE officials serving under a political mandate agreed by all participating States, including the Russian Federation. All three were detained, while the previous Secretary General confirmed that the OSCE had not waived their immunities at the time of their arrest.

Margarita Shabanova, Dmytro's wife, said Dmytro believed that "international service could protect lives and make the world a little more just." He is said to have loved his job.

Mr. Chair,

Our three colleagues have now been held for four years under conditions that remain deeply concerning.

Both Dmytro Shabanov and Maksym Petrov are reported to have been tortured by interrogators. Dmytro Shabanov is reported to have been beaten during interrogations until he lost consciousness. Maksym Petrov is known to have health issues which have worsened under detention conditions. Both have signed confessions under coercion.

All three have been subjected to so-called "legal proceedings" by authorities of the Russian occupation, which lack credibility, transparency, and any basis in international law.

Mr. Chair,

The OSCE is an organization distinguished by its ability to put peace into practice through its presence in the field. That is precisely what these officials were doing when they were detained.

Their continued detention is an attack on the OSCE's greatest strength, namely its ability to translate shared commitments into practical action on the ground. When officials carrying out an agreed OSCE mandate are detained for doing their jobs, the Organization's capacity to operate effectively in the field is called into question.

If OSCE staff can be unlawfully detained, prosecuted, and imprisoned for simply carrying out their mandate, what message does that send about this Organization's ability to act effectively? We urge all participating States to keep this in mind when discussing the evolution of our field work.

Mr. Chairperson,

This is an institutional challenge for all of us.

The OSCE is founded on the trust that participating States will honour their commitments, fulfil their obligations and enable the OSCE to carry out its activities in complete safety.

Russia's actions have destroyed that trust and set a dangerous precedent that puts all OSCE staff at risk, while undermining the only remaining platform for dialogue and co-operation on security matters in this region. Even at a time when dialogue is extremely difficult, we have a duty to preserve it and to protect the institutions that make it possible.

Canada therefore calls, once again, for the immediate and unconditional release of the three detained OSCE officials.

Mr. Chairperson,

This case cannot be viewed in isolation.

It forms part of a broader pattern that we have been witnessing since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine: a flagrant disregard for international law and an erosion of established norms. These include the protection of personnel acting under international mandates, the ability of humanitarian workers to deliver aid safely, and the expectation that diplomats and international staff can carry out their duties without fearing for their lives.

We cannot allow these fundamental principles to be hollowed out from the inside. Russia's actions are systematically lowering the bar.

Even within the broader context of Russian aggression, the detention of OSCE officials appears particularly cynical, as it directly targets the mechanisms designed to prevent conflicts and sustain peace.

Mr. Chairperson,

We urge the Swiss Chairmanship to continue its efforts to secure the immediate and unconditional release of the three detained OSCE officials, as previous Chairmanships have done.

We also encourage the Secretary General to step up his efforts to secure their release. This is an urgent matter that has a direct impact on the credibility of our Organization.

We express our solidarity with their families and loved ones, who continue to endure the pain and uncertainty caused by their prolonged detention. Canada remains firmly committed to advocating for their release and will continue its efforts until they can be safely reunited with their families.

We will not allow ourselves to be silenced, and we will not allow this serious issue to be downplayed or sidestepped by accusations of politicization.

Thank you.