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15 October 2026

On the anniversary of the verdict of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg

Mr. Chairperson,

The date of 1 October marked the 80th anniversary of the verdict handed down by the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg. As is well known, the Tribunal established the unprecedented scale of the atrocities committed by the Hitlerite regime and laid down the fundamental principles that formed the basis of the post-war world order: responsibility for planning and waging a war of aggression; war crimes and crimes against humanity; the inadmissibility of exemption from liability by virtue of high public office; and the impossibility of justifying crimes solely by claiming to have been following orders.

Among the atrocities committed by the Third Reich, the policy of enslavement and extermination of the civilian population pursued in the occupied Soviet territories stands out. The notes by Nazi leader Martin Bormann on the proceedings of meetings of Hitler's inner circle in the summer of 1941, which were presented to the Tribunal on 16 January 1946, testified to the premeditated criminal plans regarding the Soviet Union and its citizens.

The ensuing mass killings of civilians, the extermination of prisoners of war, the burning of settlements, deportations, the siege of Leningrad and much more besides came to embody these intentions. As emphasized in the statement issued by the Foreign Ministers of the Member States of the Collective Security Treaty Organization to mark the anniversary of the Nuremberg verdict, the facts established by the Tribunal regarding the extermination of the Soviet civilian population by the Nazis and their accomplices must be viewed as an act of genocide against the Soviet people.

We should like to recall the decisive role played by the Soviet Union in the establishment of international justice against the Hitlerite executioners. As early as November 1941, our country raised the issue of the need to punish Nazi criminals at some point in the future. The Soviet prosecution, led by Roman Andreyevich Rudenko, made a significant contribution to establishing the facts of the crimes committed by Hitler and his henchmen, and to presenting the relevant evidence to the Tribunal.

Mr. Chairperson,

We are convinced that the historical significance of Nuremberg is not limited to the court's verdict. It is impossible to condemn Hitlerite aggression while at the same time remaining silent about the circumstances in which the Nazi regime gained power.

The Munich Agreement of 30 September 1938 had the most serious consequences. Great Britain and France, having reached an agreement with Hitler and Mussolini, effectively decided the fate of Czechoslovakia behind the backs of its people and its leadership. At the Nuremberg trials, Field Marshal Keitel confirmed that the German high command had greatly feared a war with Czechoslovakia. Its border fortifications presented a significant obstacle to the Wehrmacht. What Hitler's generals had not dared to take by force fell into their hands as if of its own accord – thanks to the betrayal by Great Britain and France.

These are the actual consequences of a policy that is still often portrayed as a "failed attempt" to preserve peace. Munich was not merely an episode in diplomatic history. Above all, it marked a crucial stage in the dismantling of the European security system and the strengthening of Nazi Germany's military capabilities.

Therefore, when discussing historical responsibility, we cannot limit ourselves exclusively to the crimes of those who subsequently found themselves in the dock at Nuremberg. It is also extremely important to speak of those who appeased the aggressor and allowed the Nazi death machine to roll eastwards.

At the same time, we often hear talk in this room about the "equal responsibility of the two totalitarian regimes" for the unleashing of the Second World War, with the notorious Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact being brought up at every opportunity, whether appropriate or not. However, we must emphasize that the USSR was the last State to conclude such an agreement with Germany. And even then, only because it had no other choice. It was Great Britain and France that, through their policy of "appeasement of the aggressor" at the expense of the interests and territories of third countries, had placed the USSR in such a position. Under no circumstances can the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact be regarded as the primary incentive for Hitler's unleashing of a world war, as some pseudo-historians and irresponsible politicians often attempt to portray it. Such claims are mainly churned out by the authorities of those countries that were allied with the Third Reich. Alternatively, these claims are exploited by people and organizations whose heroes served the Nazis.

However, during the Cold War, no one raised any objections with the USSR regarding the agreement in question. This only began after the shift in the ideological paradigm. It is worth recalling that even Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary from 1938 to 1940 and an active proponent of the aforementioned policy of "appeasement of the aggressor", speaking in the House of Lords in the autumn of 1939, said that the Soviet Union had been forced to take this course of action.

And for those who like to speculate about the "equal responsibility of the two totalitarian regimes for the unleashing of the war" – a line of argument particularly overused by Polish representatives – I should like to refer to the words of Krzysztof Rak, a historian, albeit perhaps a biased one, and former director of the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation: "That is a very difficult question; it is no longer a matter of history, but of politics. I do not like making any comparisons here. Hitler and the Third Reich, Stalin and the USSR – they are not one and the same. These are two completely different political, social and philosophical systems. Nowadays, we have become fond of simplifying everything, even the most complicated things. However, as a historian, I know that history is far more complex than it seems. To publicists and journalists, Stalin and Hitler appear to be one and the same evil, but not to the historian."

Mr. Chairperson,

Today, the question as to the significance of the Nuremberg Tribunal is more pressing than ever. First and foremost, in the context of the extremely dangerous trend towards the rehabilitation of Nazis and their accomplices in a number of OSCE participating States.

In particular, we are referring to the glorification in Ukraine of the Hitlerite butcher Stepan Bandera. On 15 October, the anniversary of his death is marked once more. We should like to recall the real political – rather than mythological – legacy of this Nazi henchman: the Lvov pogroms, the Volhynia massacre, and the mass killings of Poles, Jews, Russians, Ukrainians and other civilians. These are not fabrications of Russian propaganda, nor are they "inconvenient details" that can be erased from history on someone's political orders. These are crimes recorded in documents and eyewitness accounts and seared on the memories of the peoples who survived the Nazi occupation.

Evidence of these atrocities is preserved in archives, including those in Russia. These crimes will not disappear simply because streets are renamed, monuments to Soviet soldiers are dismantled or school textbooks are rewritten.

On 5 August 2026, the Tverskoy District Court of Moscow, acting on a lawsuit filed by the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation, recognized the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), along with a number of their leaders, including Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych, as accomplices of Nazi Germany in war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against the Soviet people.

It is precisely these figures who are being commemorated in Ukraine today. Streets are being named after them, monuments are being erected to them, and public events are being held in their honour. At the same time, the criminal chapters of history associated with these figures are either pushed into the background or justified by references to the struggle for "independence".

The statement made by our delegation at the OSCE Permanent Council on 24 September this year, in which the grounds for classifying the current Ukrainian leadership as neo-Nazi were set out in detail, is telling. We mentioned the glorification of OUN and UPA figures at the State level, the honouring of their ideological followers, the use of Nazi symbols and the destruction of monuments to, and burial sites of, those who liberated Ukraine from the Hitlerite invaders.

In this context, another aspect of current goings-on deserves particular attention, namely the direct link between the hybrid war being waged by NATO and the European Union against Russia and the rehabilitation of the Nazi legacy in Ukraine. It is not only on the battlefield that actions are being taken against our country. A war is being waged against historical memory, against the truth about the Great Patriotic War, against the Red Army's liberating mission and the decisive contribution of the Soviet people to the defeat of Hitlerite Germany.

In the 1930s, Great Britain and France, through the decisions they took, helped to strengthen Hitler's Germany, hoping to gain political advantages from this. Today, Western capitals are once again banking on anti-Russian forces, having no qualms about using the glorification of Nazi collaborators in their ideological arsenal.

Yesterday, it was the Munich Agreement and pandering to Hitler. Today, it is a proxy war against Russia and condoning the glorification of Nazi criminals. Circumstances may change, but the desire to use humanity-hating forces against our country does not.

In concluding, we would emphasize that the Nuremberg verdict remains the unshakeable foundation of the international legal order, and its legacy cannot be subject to political bargaining. It left no justification for the crimes of Nazism. Nor will there be any justification for the crimes of those who unleashed a war against our country.

Thank you for your attention.