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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1455th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 December 2023

**In response to the report by the Special Representative of the
OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Corruption**

Mr. Chairperson,

We have taken note of the report on the work carried out over the past year by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Corruption, Ms. Anita Ramasastry, and the recommendations contained therein. Admittedly, we should like to have more time to study in detail the document, which was distributed only yesterday. Let us share with you our preliminary assessments and thoughts.

Unfortunately, the failure of the OSCE Chairmanship of North Macedonia to agree on the parameters for the holding of the 31st OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum considerably undermined the possibility of carrying out proper work within the cycle of economic and environmental dimension events, including work on anti-corruption issues. At the same time, we note the constructive exchange of information on national efforts in countering corruption, including in the field of environmental protection, which took place during the OSCE Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting – as it turns out, the only OSCE event agreed upon this year, apart from the Ministerial Council meeting in Skopje.

The destructive reach of corruption is global. That is why efforts to combat corruption must be of a transnational nature, why they must be carried out systematically through the consistent strengthening of international co-operation, with the United Nations playing a central co-ordinating role and on the basis of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. We are convinced that the only way to deal with the extensive challenges posed by corruption is to do so jointly, following a constructive agenda and common approaches in the anti-corruption field. The relevant Russian agencies are actively involved in multilateral anti-corruption efforts, including the work of the Commonwealth of Independent States' Inter-State Council on Combating Corruption and the Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities.

At the same time, we are concerned about the increasing politicization of co-operation against crime. The competent Russian authorities note that a number of countries have not responded to requests for legal assistance in corruption cases, including matters involving forfeiture of unexplained wealth to the State.

Since the beginning of 2023, 37 Russian requests for legal assistance have been refused by foreign States, 33 of them for political reasons.

This practice is not only indicative of a direct violation by individual countries of their obligations deriving from applicable international treaties, but also allows offenders to avoid criminal liability. We believe that this is categorically unacceptable and urge all States to engage in depoliticized co-operation.

We advocate the strengthening of the international legal regime for asset recovery, also to ensure the repatriation of funds to the countries of origin and their use for development purposes. We condemn the selective approach of States in deciding on the repatriation of stolen funds. We regard as unacceptable the practice of imposing conditions for the return of assets to the countries of origin, since this runs counter to the principles of respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the affairs of other States.

The OSCE, acting within its mandate, also has an important role to play in international anti-corruption efforts. The participating States have built up a solid set of commitments in this field. A significant addition was the adoption, at the Ministerial Council meeting in Tirana in 2020, of Decision No. 6/20 on preventing and combating corruption through digitalization and increased transparency.

Mr. Chairperson,

In Russia, the utmost priority is given to preventing and combating corruption. As in many other OSCE participating States, comprehensive and systematic measures are being taken in our country to counter corruption. Sustained work on the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Plan for the period 2021–2024 is under way.

Improving anti-corruption legislation is of key importance in the fight against corruption. In that regard, Russia is adopting amendments and additions to the 2008 Federal Anti-Corruption Act. In particular, in 2022–2023 the Act was supplemented with mechanisms for the forfeiture to the State of funds belonging to officials where the legality of origin of these funds has not been confirmed.

As before, we are open to equal and mutually respectful dialogue on ways of building broad-based inter-State co-operation in combating corruption and are ready to share our best practices in this field.

Mr. Chairperson,

Our meeting is taking place on the eve of International Anti-Corruption Day, which is observed on 9 December. This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. We hope that this important anniversary will prove to be a good occasion not only to take stock of the work done, but also to set new tasks in overcoming the remaining difficulties in the fight against corruption.

Thank you for your attention.