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PC.DEL/218/23  
16 February 2023

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1411th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

16 February 2023

**In response to the remarks by the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, H.E. Ms. Gillian Triggs**

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the distinguished Assistant to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms. Gillian Triggs, to this Permanent Council meeting.

Russia traditionally attaches great importance to the development of co-operation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as the principal international body having a specific focus on the problems of forced migration. Russia traditionally also supports the holding of joint OSCE-UNHCR seminars on the critical issue of statelessness. We believe it necessary to continue this useful practice.

We consider the Office's activities to be extremely important when major humanitarian crises occur, especially given the relevance of this work in the OSCE area.

Overall, we commend this agency's role in dealing with the migration-related consequences of crises, including in Ukraine. We are in regular contact on this matter with UNHCR headquarters in Geneva and the UNHCR representation in Russia. We regularly bring to the UNHCR's attention objective information about our country's considerable efforts in working with displaced persons.

Russia is implementing large-scale programmes to facilitate the accommodation and social integration of those who, for various reasons, are not yet able to return to their homes. Those living in temporary accommodation centres on the territory of the Russian Federation – in the Republic of Crimea, the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, the Bryansk, Kherson, Kursk, Rostov, Voronezh and Zaporizhzhia regions and other parts of Russia – are provided with everything necessary for a normal life. Socio-economic, medical, psychological and other support measures for these categories of citizens have been introduced; issues regarding their future employment, places for children in kindergartens and educational institutions, the provision of welfare payments and benefits, and so on are being addressed.

The UNHCR representation in Moscow is able to see for itself the effectiveness of Russia's efforts in resettling refugees and respecting their rights. Its staff regularly familiarize themselves with the work at temporary accommodation centres in various constituent entities of the Russian Federation. We would remind you that refugee sites everywhere on Russian territory, including Crimea, Donbas and the Dnieper Lowland, can be visited by UNHCR specialists.

The visits conducted so far have not resulted in any complaints being voiced against the Russian authorities with regard to the conditions in which displaced persons are living. In general, the high level of assistance organized for these people in our country was noted. Bearing that in mind, we regard as absurd the accusations made by certain States against Russia regarding the alleged forcible transfer of people to the Russian Federation.

According to the head of the UNHCR representation in Moscow, Karim Atassi, the Office is not aware of any cases in which people have been removed to Russia by force. Moreover, no such cases of alleged forcible transfer or detention have been identified by the partner organizations with which the UNHCR works in our country. Thus, the insinuations about any "forced relocations" of displaced persons are unfounded. We urge everyone, the OSCE executive structures too, not to deal in uncorroborated information.

Mr. Chairperson,  
Ms. Triggs,

Addressing the consequences of migration crises requires the co-ordination of efforts by all States and the implementation in good faith of their international obligations to protect the rights of migrants and refugees. At the same time, approaches in this field cannot contradict the basic principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. The measures taken must not violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States or be implemented without the consent of the countries where these measures are being taken.

In that regard, we urge that the discussion not be reduced solely to issues related to the situation in Ukraine and that increased attention be paid to the plight of refugees in other parts of the OSCE area, especially in the Member States of the European Union and in North America.

As you know, it was the aggressive policy of the European Union and the United States of America to destabilize the situation in the Middle East and North Africa that brought about a migration crisis in Europe on a scale unprecedented since the Second World War. Its repercussions are still being felt to this day: a rise in radicalism, socio-political turmoil, trafficking in human beings, increased flows of illegal weapons, and so on.

At the same time, there are serious problems with the observance of asylum seekers' rights in the "enlightened West": we are obliged to note that in Europe and North America forced migrants are not receiving help, but being combated. Instead of taking care of these people in a civilized manner, "democratic" States prefer to erect walls along their borders and take an openly discriminatory approach as to who may be worthy of entering their territory.

To say nothing of the immoral measures taken by certain OSCE participating States with regard to refugees. For example, the unprecedented decision by the British authorities to deport "illegal immigrants" to Rwanda, a country that is anything but safe. Or the UK Government's draconian Nationality and Borders Act passed last July, which allows boats carrying migrants to be pushed back out to sea and people looking

for safety to be sent to “third countries”. The law also criminalizes the seeking of asylum if the individuals in question have entered the United Kingdom in an “unauthorized” or “unusual” manner.

In that regard, “Merry England” is apparently following the example of the United States, whose authorities continue to deny migrants asylum and push them back to its border with Mexico. And this dangerous process would not be complete without racial profiling.

The situation in the European Union is far from ideal either. Its Member States have also failed for years to address the problems of overcrowding in refugee camps, difficult living conditions for refugees, the deaths of asylum seekers along migration routes, including maritime ones, and the involvement of unaccompanied minors in illegal activities, including drug dealing, prostitution and begging.

The European Union is “enhancing” forcible removal procedures. In December 2022, the reputable non-governmental organization Border Violence Monitoring Network published a new edition of “The Black Book of Pushbacks”. It contains over 1,500 witness testimonies on expulsion practices, numerous accounts of beatings and abuse, and even of the use of firearms. What is more, we are talking about an EU-wide practice that has been *de facto* approved by the authorities in Brussels. The lack of a reaction on the part of EU officials to the adoption by Poland, Lithuania and Latvia of laws that legalize expulsions is in keeping with these approaches.

Moreover, at the end of 2022, there was further confirmation of the involvement of Frontex (the EU agency responsible for the security of external borders) in violations of migrants’ rights, on this occasion the rights of migrants from Libya. In particular, the EU agency in question is using aerial reconnaissance equipment to intercept boats carrying asylum seekers. They are then forcibly returned to the African continent.

These and many other cases are proof of the disregard for the principles of humanity, freedom of movement and respect for human rights enshrined both in the European Union’s own human rights legislation – the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights – and in the relevant international instruments. I am referring to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol, and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

We call upon the countries mentioned by us to stop violating their international obligations to protect the rights of migrants and refugees and to finally start taking responsibility for their actions in neighbouring regions. It is time to start calling out these acts for what they are and to give them a principled assessment at last.

In concluding, I should like to take this opportunity to wish you, Ms. Triggs, and your Office strength and success in the noble activities carried out by this United Nations institution.

Thank you for your attention.