



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA TO THE UN,
OSCE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

**Statement by Ambassador Nils Jansons, Permanent
Representative of the Republic of Latvia in response to the
statement delivered by the Russian Federation**

Permanent Council No 751,
Vienna, February 26, 2009

Madam Chairperson,

Regrettably, we were not able to familiarize ourselves with the remarks of the distinguished Russian Ambassador, before they were delivered at this meeting. However, since my country was specifically mentioned, I should like to offer some comments.

First of all, I would like to repeat once again what has been said in this room on earlier occasions. Namely, that the Republic of Latvia rejects any totalitarian ideology and policy. Latvia strongly condemns the crime of Holocaust. We clearly condemn crimes of Nazism and Stalinism.

At the same time, Latvia is a country where all the fundamental freedoms are guaranteed including the freedom of expression. Censorship is expressly forbidden by the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia. However, the state policy has been to consistently condemn expressions of intolerance, including anti-Semitism.

Freedom of association is also guaranteed in Latvia, and the state does not and can not persecute non-governmental organizations just for the fact of veterans getting together and sharing their wartime memories.

As far as monuments are concerned, all incidents involving desecration of monuments or graves are carefully investigated and prosecuted, like, presumably, it is done in similar cases in Russia.

Madam Chairperson,

Permit me also a general remark regarding the understanding of history. In spite of the differences we have, history is an important issue that we try to address in our bilateral relations with Russia. Russian historians participate in the International Historical Commission that has worked under the auspices of the President's office since 1998, conducting research and rising public awareness. In our bilateral dialogue we have been discussing access to the archives, so much needed for a less partial understanding of history. And we remain hopeful for more progress in this matter.

Finally, let me express hope and expectation that 16th of March, which was mentioned here, is not going to be exploited by those who would like to spoil bilateral Latvian-Russian relations, which at present are developing in a constructive and pragmatic fashion.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.