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PC.DEL/424/23
30 March 2023

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1417th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 March 2023

On the human rights situation in Russia

Mr. Chairperson,

Those present in this room who have studied Russian are familiar with a proverbial expression from a classic of our literature, the immortal comedy *Woe from Wit* by the diplomat Aleksandr Griboedov, where the protagonist ponders over the question: “Who are the judges, though?” This phrase is used in my country to refer to people who display incompetence and lack of objectivity when uttering an opinion, and also to refer to those who condemn others for things of which they are themselves guilty.

Philologists are inclined to the view that this expression is a paraphrase of the following passage from the Epistle of James in the New Testament: “There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?”

So we, too, taking our cue from the representatives of the United States of America, will ponder over that question: who are the judges, though?

The United States is the last country that springs to mind when thinking about a model to be emulated in the field of human rights. Indeed, the word “Guantánamo” needs no further explanation nowadays as far as anyone is concerned, including in this room, since it has effectively become synonymous with brutal and unmotivated violence against the individual.

For the benefit of the US representatives, we would like to clarify that one may arguably adopt a lecturing stance and talk down to others, but only if one is an indisputable authority in a given field. That is not their case. You must not imagine that you are entitled to criticize others on their human rights record and churn out countless objectionable reports on a wide range of issues on the human rights agenda while hushing up problems in your own country or following a selective approach to the implementation of international obligations. As for your opportunistic assessments and even direct attacks against the authorities of sovereign States, these do not stand up to scrutiny. They constitute, in effect, direct interference in those States’ internal affairs.

This seems especially cynical in view of the intensifying systemic problems in the United States itself, where racism and racial discrimination against African Americans and members of other racial and national minorities are flourishing, as are xenophobia, the activity of far-right organizations, impunity for inhuman treatment and torture, application of the death penalty and much more besides. Not to mention multiple international crimes, including 32 military interventions since the end of the Second World War that have led to numerous casualties.

It is time for the US authorities to stop indulging in lecturing those who have no need of such lectures and, rather, to set about addressing in earnest the pressing problems in their own country. You want to promote democracy and human rights? Then do so not through sweeping criticisms, but by setting a positive example. You still have to work on yourselves a lot in that regard. Here it is, again, most clearly said in the Bible, in the Gospel of Matthew: “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother: ‘Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye’; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”

Mr. Chairperson,

In closing, I should like to offer a further quotation, this time of more recent provenance, namely from the joint statement of 21 March 2023 by the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on deepening their relations of comprehensive partnership and strategic co-ordination as these enter a new era: “The two sides note that the universal realization of human rights is a common striving of humankind. Each State is entitled to independently choose its path of development in the field of human rights. Different civilizations and countries must respect and accept one another, communicate and learn from one another more effectively. The two sides will unswervingly advance human rights at the national and global levels.”

Thank you for your attention.