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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1381st MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 July 2022

**In response to the report by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities,  
Mr. Kairat Abdrakhmanov**

High Commissioner,

We welcome you to the Permanent Council. We have carefully read your comprehensive report and should like to make the following remarks.

We are disappointed by the assessments, attitudes and interpretations contained in your report concerning the root causes and tasks of Russia's necessary special military operation in Ukraine.

You first turn to the situation in Ukraine, as much of your attention "has been, and continues to be, related to the ongoing war on its territory". There has indeed been a war there for the past eight years – a despicable war against the country's own population, elevated by the Kyiv regime to the level of State policy, which is one of the main causes of the current crisis in Ukraine.

For many years, with the active support of the United States of America, the European Union and other countries of the Western alliance, violence has been propagated in Ukraine and Russophobia and hatred of all Russians, including the Russian-speaking citizens of the country, have been cultivated. The ultimate goal is to sever the historical and cultural ties between Russia and Ukraine, which no doubt serves the geopolitical interests of the patrons of the Kyiv regime. And how is this easiest to accomplish, given the centuries-old ties between Russia and Ukraine? Through the artificial sowing of division along linguistic lines and the distortion of a common historical past, of course.

That is why the aggressive imposition of the Ukrainian language in the country has been continuing at pace since 2017. It has been forbidden to use any language other than Ukrainian in education, the public sector, the media and the service sector. As a result of the adoption of a number of laws, notably on education, general secondary education and ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the State language, the Russian language has been discriminated against on a number of fronts and Russian speakers have been denied fundamental human rights and freedoms.

High Commissioner, you have described Ukraine as “a country working to maintain the delicate balance between the interests and rights of all groups in society, including persons belonging to national minorities”. Moreover, you state that this country’s efforts to engage in inclusive dialogue and to recognize and value diversity when developing legislation gives you hope. It begs the question, what data did you rely on when you drew such optimistic conclusions? Should your conclusions be written off as ignorance? Or is this simply a deliberate distortion of reality?

Moreover, the Ukrainian authorities are continuing their Russophobic endeavours. A ban has been imposed on receiving education in the Russian language, and on the import of Russian books and the study of Russian literature – even as foreign literature – in Ukrainian schools and universities. Further amendments to the Act on Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language have come into force. Total Ukrainization now extends to the film industry, cultural events and Internet information resources registered in Ukraine. A draft law that would prohibit the broadcasting of Russian music on the radio is awaiting parliamentary approval.

As for the allegations about the purported clampdown on the Ukrainian language in the liberated territories, they are untrue. People themselves have the right to choose which language they wish to study.

High Commissioner,

We note your attention to the ongoing debate on legislative initiatives in such fields as education and historical memory in Latvia. As you know, the Cabinet of Ministers has adopted amendments to the Education Act and the General Education Act that provide for a transition to teaching in the Latvian language by 2025. The amendments adopted will also extend to private educational institutions.

In this regard, allow me to correct you. The implementation of these initiatives will not simply “restrict the space for minority rights”, but will lead to the assimilation of the Russian-speaking population of this country. Can you imagine, High Commissioner, the ecstasy that this thought evokes in Latvian nationalists?

We are surprised at the complete absence of any mention of Estonia in your report. The silence of this respected OSCE executive structure contributes to the cultivation of the illusion that inter-ethnic relations in Estonia are good. Statistical data, notably from Estonian sources, show the opposite. The repressive language policy and deliberate assimilation of the Russian-speaking population is evidenced by the fact that, of the 520 secondary education institutions, only 74 remain with partial teaching in Russian. For comparison, some ten years ago this figure was almost 100 schools. The number of non-citizens in this country is 68,000 people or 6 per cent of population. Estonia’s attempts to boast of a supposedly literate naturalization policy do not stand up to criticism. According to Eurostat, Estonia remains the absolute outsider in the European Union in terms of naturalization rates, which are steadily decreasing: in 2014, 1,589 people were naturalized, in 2017 it was 558 people, and in 2020 – 497 people. Moreover, the decrease in the number of non-citizens is largely a result of the natural decline in the population.

Repressive measures to impose the Estonian language, the persistence of the shameful phenomenon of mass statelessness, and discrimination in the workplace on the basis of language have been acknowledged by authoritative international structures. In May this year, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination pointed this out to the Estonian Government in its concluding observations. So why is your Office ignoring these facts?

High Commissioner,

Unfortunately, the Estonian story is not the only one that, despite its relevance, has not been reflected in your Office's thematic activities. We have repeatedly urged you to pay attention to what is happening in the OSCE participating States across the ocean, where the situation continues to worsen. At the end of May, the Parliament of Quebec in Canada approved sweeping amendments to the legislation on the use of the French language in various spheres of life. They set limits on the number of students in English-language schools and introduced a requirement to use French to communicate in commercial enterprises of over 25 people.

The situation of the First Nations in the United States also leaves much to be desired. This is demonstrated in particular by data from the non-governmental organization the Native American Rights Fund. Native Americans continue to have low literacy rates, First Nations children are more likely to be discriminated against and young people are more likely to receive disciplinary action. In the past year, there has been an unprecedentedly high suicide rate, comparable to that of veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

High Commissioner,

We believe you should pay more attention to problems related to the situation of national minorities "west of Vienna". For example, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination pointed out problems in this area in the Netherlands last August.

Once again, we urge you not to narrow your activities geographically or thematically. We already have an executive structure that does this – the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Its bias is off the charts.

In conclusion, allow me to wish you and the staff at your Office success in your work.

Thank you for your attention.