



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

ENGLISH only

## **Statement by Ambassador Gints Apals, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Latvia, delivered in response to the statement by the Delegation of the Russian Federation**

Permanent Council No.939,  
Vienna, 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2013

Mr Chairman,  
Excellences,  
Distinguished delegates,

Having fully subscribed to the EU statement on the subject I have to exercise my right of response to the statement just made by the Russian Federation. I deeply regret the fact that the Delegation of Russia has used the Holocaust Remembrance Day as a pretext to attack certain legislative initiatives of my country. Latvian authorities have consistently condemned all crimes against humanity. Latvia categorically denounces the Holocaust, mourns its victims and is strongly committed to education, remembrance and research of this immense human tragedy.

During the Second World War Latvia suffered under the occupation of two totalitarian regimes – the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. These powers forcibly and illegally drafted many people to join their military units, breaching the Hague Convention of 1907. Those who attempted to avoid conscription risked imprisonment or death. The President of Latvia has initiated joint commemorative events for former soldiers. This initiative has been welcomed by all major war veteran organizations. In line with the President's initiative the Parliament of Latvia is discussing draft law "On the Status of Persons Mobilized during the Second World War". The purpose of the draft law is to provide social guarantees for former soldiers. The draft law expressly excludes persons who were responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity or collaborated with Nazi or Soviet repressive structures.

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to make two comments pertinent to the emerging debate about historical reconciliation in OSCE area. First, I do appreciate the fact that the Russian delegation is moving away from the specific concept of the Great Patriotic War and making references to the whole period of time between 1939 and 1945 known to the international community as the Second World War. Let us hope that this sends a signal about Russia's willingness to acknowledge the complexity of war-time events and the need to address such issues as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Soviet entry into the war in 1939 and Soviet occupation of the Baltic States in 1940.

Second, I would like to invite my Russian colleagues to critically evaluate the information produced by Nazi propaganda, including the myth about the voluntary nature of the Latvian Legion. Accepting and reproducing Nazi lies is not something that we need to do here in the Permanent Council of the OSCE, not least because this is a slippery slope that might lead to the justification of the Holocaust denial.

Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.