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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 992nd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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Regarding human rights violations in the European Union

Mr. Chairperson,

We have taken note of the concerns of the delegation of the European Union. On several occasions we have given detailed explanations of many of the topics. We have provided information on Aleksey Navalny, including his criminal past, more than once. I fail to understand what questions could arise in relation to the situation of Galina Timchenko. Her ten-year contract finished and she moved to another job. As far as the persons detained during the recent demonstrations are concerned, they were soon released. We understand and have experienced the gravity of the human rights problem and are working actively to improve the situation. This is why we constantly call for these issues be given particular attention within the OSCE. This is our aim, too.

You correctly stated that 173 cases of violence motivated by xenophobia and racial hatred were recorded in Russia last year. Our country has a population of 140 million, with more than 190 nationalities and around 60 religions and religious denominations, as well as tens of millions of migrants. However, every case of this kind is a matter of serious concern to the authorities. For purposes of comparison, in the same year there were 238 recorded cases of violence motivated by racial hatred in Norway, an advanced democracy with a population of 5 million.

Regarding the dismissal of Professor Andrey Zubov, I believe that the university is entitled to its own human resources policy. Professor Zubov has the right to contest the decision in court and, according to our information, he intends to do so.

This is not the first time in this forum that the European Union has positioned itself at the forefront of the battle for human rights. However, we have never heard any convincing explanations for the human rights violations in the European Union that we have spoken about at the Permanent Council on several occasions.

Apart from specific examples of the infringement of human and civil rights and freedoms, there are still systemic human rights problems in the European Union. They are described in detail in the report on the human rights situation in the European Union by the

Commissioner for Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

European Union officials justify the low level of activity of the supranational EU bodies in cases of human rights violations in the EU by the fact that these bodies lack the necessary powers, although Articles 2 and 7 of the Treaty of Lisbon permit certain measures to be taken. In particular, the European Commission shows a persistent unwillingness to interfere in the case of the significant violation of the human rights of the Russian-speaking population of Latvia and Estonia, which includes large-scale statelessness. Incidentally, there is another tool for reducing the sphere of application of commitments – reservations to international treaties. In Latvia and Estonia, the reservations to the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities exclude so-called non-citizens from its sphere of application.

The march of former members of the SS in Riga on 16 March, which was once again permitted by the Latvian authorities, is a cause for grave concern. Although the authorities took steps to ensure that no representatives of the Government participated in the march, they attempted to give this event political significance through the attendance of members of the Saeima (parliament) from the governing coalition. It is also puzzling that the European Parliament failed to react to the presence of Roberts Zīle, a European parliamentarian from Latvia, at a religious service for fallen members of the SS. Or are manoeuvres of this kind by parliamentarians now becoming part of a European Union policy of showing special tolerance to radical nationalists and neo-Nazis? And how does this fit in with the image of Riga, the city chosen as this year's European "capital of culture"?

The most recent act of vandalism by Lithuanian nationalists at a memorial site for victims of the Nazi regime at Paneriai, which they "timed to coincide with" Lithuanian Independence Day, is outrageous. A hundred thousand people are buried there, the majority of whom were victims of the Holocaust.

According to the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, there are 22,500 right-wing extremists in Germany, 6,000 of whom are united in 157 neo-Nazi groups. According to research by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, more than a quarter of Germans have feelings of hostility towards foreigners. As a result, Islamophobia has risen to 60 per cent.

In line with numerous OSCE decisions (including Ministerial Council decisions adopted at Brussels in 2006 and Madrid in 2007), the participating States are committed to countering extremism, radicalism and neo-Nazism and stopping any manifestations of these phenomena, including in the media and on the Internet. Incidentally, the Moscow authorities made their permission for the Russian march you mentioned contingent on the absence of extremist and nationalist slogans. They checked the playlist for the concert that concluded the march and also moved the event to the outskirts of the city. Moreover, all the offenders, more than 30 persons, were detained.

There are also serious problems with the observance of the right to freedom of assembly. Recent cases include clashes with police during a demonstration against President Hollande in Paris on 26 January, mass clashes in Nantes in February this year between police and demonstrators who were protesting against the construction of an airport, and the violent dispersal of a peaceful demonstration in Hamburg, during which, according to

a non-governmental organization, around 500 demonstrators were injured. Tear gas was used at a peaceful demonstration by teachers in Greece on 28 February. A demonstration in Madrid on 22 March at which many thousands of people protested against economic cutbacks by the Spanish Government developed into clashes with police, who used force and riot control equipment.

A striking example of the double standards of EU Member States in ensuring freedom of the media and access of citizens to various sources of information is the suspension of NTV Mir broadcasting in Lithuania on 21 March. Another significant recent example of “freedom of expression and freedom of speech” is the dismissal in Finland of the well-known television presenter Jari Sarasvuo and the axing of his talk show after an interview with the Finnish human rights activist Johann Bäckman, whose opinion on Ukraine did not tally with that of our Western colleagues.

These are just a few of the problematic human rights topics in the European Union. It would be desirable for the EU countries, which have an enviable ability to develop a consolidated position with regard to other countries, to finally show the same solidarity in preparing their consolidated responses to our concerns.

Thank you for your attention.