

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT THE OSCE SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN
DIMENSION MEETING ON FREEDOMS OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY
AND ASSOCIATION, WITH EMPHASIS ON
FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION**

Vienna, 16 and 17 April 2015

**Session III: Enhancing the participation of associations in
public decision-making processes**

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished participants,

The Russian Federation pays great attention to the activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs with different thematic focuses and views from various countries take part every year in the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw and the Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings. At the same time, the absence of civil society representatives from a number of Western countries, particularly from those that more than any fight for greater participation by civil society in the OSCE's work, is remarkable. One might ask why this is. It surely cannot be because they have no human rights problems in their countries, at least to judge by the news and reports by various human rights organizations on human rights violations in the European Union, the United States of America and Canada. Or could it be that the authorities in these States simply do not inform civil society of opportunities like this and of specific events?

The participation of a wide stratum of civil society plays an important role in the elaboration and discussion of decisions. This allows full consideration of the specific concerns and interests both of the State and of the different civil society groups. Unfortunately, a selective approach still prevails within the Organization regarding the participation of NGOs in OSCE events. And unfortunately, the Chairmanship and executive structures of our Organization look to a select group of NGOs, which are invited to hold forums and draft recommendations for all participating States, which, like it or not, have to be accepted as the basis for the elaboration of the Organization's collective documents. Mention might be made in particular of events by the Civic Solidarity Platform, which represents around 60 NGOs, whereas there are over 670,000 in Russia alone, on the day before Ministerial Council meetings, and the participation by a handful of NGOs invited by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to draft guidelines on human rights issues. However, the process for selecting these NGOs is opaque and their points of view by no means reflect the full extent of the concerns of civil society in the 57 OSCE participating

States. For that reason, the recommendations made by this narrow circle of NGOs frequently fail to find consensus in the OSCE.

Russia has a Presidential Decree on Public Discussion of Draft Federal Constitutional Laws and Federal Laws and Presidential Decision No. 159 on Ratification of the Rules of Procedure for Public Discussion of Draft Federal Constitutional Laws and Federal Laws, under which civil society was actively involved in drafting the Law on Police and the Law on Education.

There are many consultative platforms in Russia allowing greater participation by NGOs in political and legislative activities. They include the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, and various presidential councils such as the Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights, the Council for Interethnic Relations and the Council for Co-ordination with Religious Organizations, as well as public councils within ministries. There are similar consultative structures at the regional level. They allow representatives of civil society not only to pursue dialogue and to discuss topics of concern to them, but also to take part in the adoption and implementation of decisions by parliaments and councils of deputies at the regional and municipal level.

On the initiative of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, an NGO portal has been set up for representatives of civic organizations, enabling members of NGOs to obtain the information required for their work and, in particular, to find out about the laws governing NGO activity.

In accordance with the Presidential Order of the Russian Federation on providing State support for NGOs participating in the development of civil society institutions and implementing socially significant projects to protect human and civil rights and freedoms, subsidies are earmarked annually within the federal budget for non-profit organizations of this type.

Thank you for your attention.