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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1279th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 September 2020

On the anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War

Mr. Chairperson,

The First of September was a sad date of commemoration, for it marked 81 years since the beginning of the Second World War, which led to the death of tens of millions of people. The War was without doubt the greatest tragedy of the twentieth century and left its imprint on the fate of many a generation.

The events that brought the world to that fateful juncture continue to this day to remain a focus of attention for scholars and for public and political figures.

“Seventy-five years have passed since the end of the Great Patriotic War. Several generations have grown up over the years. The political map of our planet has changed. The Soviet Union that claimed an epic, crushing victory over Nazism and saved the entire world is gone.” These are the opening words of an article by the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, entitled “75th Anniversary of the Great Victory: Shared Responsibility to History and our Future”.

To our great regret, we are obliged to note that cynical attempts are being undertaken in some Western countries and in certain Eastern European ones to reconsider the causes and outcomes of the Second World War. Historical facts are brazenly distorted for the sake of self-seeking interests: thus, the Red Army’s decisive role in the victory over Nazism is disputed, and the liberators are equated with the butchers. Persistent efforts are being made to elevate those who fought against the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition or who collaborated with the Nazis to the status of national heroes and figureheads of national liberation movements.

Several Western countries and Eastern European ones have turned these approaches into State policy. A deliberate blurring of concepts is going on, the aim being to draw a parallel between the war crimes, the crimes against humanity and the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis and their acolytes on the one hand, and the policies of the USSR on the other. It is in this very vein that the claim is made as to Nazi Germany and the USSR bearing equal responsibility for the start of the war, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact having allegedly given the Third Reich “a free hand”. Among the most prominent champions of this claim are representatives of Poland and the Baltic States.

Significantly, many Western politicians and experts “forget” what it was that led to the signing of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact of 1939. They also “forget” that the latter had been preceded by the Munich Agreement in September 1938, whereby the United Kingdom and France allowed the Sudetenland to be ripped away from Czechoslovakia. In mid-March 1939, Nazi Germany – once again meeting with no resistance on the part of the Western powers – annexed all of the remaining Czech lands and installed a puppet state in Slovakia.

It is no secret that one of the first countries to conclude a non-aggression pact with Hitler was Poland, which did so as early as 1934. Following the Munich Agreement, Poland annexed part of Czechoslovakia’s sovereign territory, namely an area in the region of Těšín Silesia, thereby effectively becoming an accomplice in the carving up of that country.

As is well known, the policy of appeasement towards German aggression resulted in several years of savage warfare, with tens of millions killed, wounded and missing; it also led to the Holocaust, the Nazi concentration camps, starvation, ruination and other forms of suffering for millions of people. Overcoming these consequences and restoring the opportunity to live in peace required an incredible effort and the creation of an anti-Hitler coalition for the liberation of Europe.

Before taking the difficult decision to agree on non-aggression with Nazi Germany, the Soviet Government had for a long time been trying to conclude an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance (sometimes referred to as “a second Entente”). However, all its efforts proved to be in vain, since the leaders of the United Kingdom and France at the time were hoping to divert Hitler’s aggression eastwards.

Despite the legal mechanisms that have been established, Nazi ideology is unfortunately on the rise again today in a number of OSCE participating States. Nazi ideas and values are being propagated openly, radical nationalists are rearing their ugly heads, attempts are being made to drive wedges through society on the basis of national and linguistic characteristics.

In the Sinimäed Hills (Blue Hills) in Estonia, gatherings take place of admirers of the Estonians who served in the 20th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS. In Riga, annual processions are held on 16 March by veterans of the Latvian Legion of the Waffen SS and their radical young supporters. Similar processions are held in Lithuania, too. In Ukraine, the glorification of Nazi henchmen – Stepan Bandera, Roman Shukhevych and others – has become official State policy. The Government of Ukraine is financing “military-patriotic” camps for young people organized under the aegis of the far-right groups C14 and National Corps, thereby effectively giving these organizations a veneer of legitimacy. In the United States of America, more than 900 different hate groups are active and at work propagating intolerance on the basis of religion, race or gender identity.

Celebration of the Nazis is an insult to the memory of their victims and contravenes the international obligations of States. Such actions also violate the United Nations General Assembly resolution condemning the glorification of Nazism. It is telling that Ukraine and the United States are the only countries that each year vote against that instrument.

The Second World War is a demonstration of the truly catastrophic consequences that can arise from believing in one’s own exclusivity and staking everything on national egoism. Common security can be achieved only through joint efforts. The 75th anniversary of victory in the Second World War which we are celebrating this year provides a good incentive to step up our joint efforts aimed at countering the glorification of Nazism, manifestations of neo-Nazism and the falsification of history.

Thank you for your attention.