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

Statement of Latvia in response to the Report of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov

**Permanent Council No.1318,
Vienna, 3 June 2021**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

Latvia fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and would like to take this opportunity and add some remarks in its national capacity.

We join others in warmly welcoming the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov at the Permanent Council and thank him for presenting his first report.

As the High Commissioner mentioned, introductory meetings between him and the Latvian authorities have started. We highly appreciate manner of communication with the High Commissioner and wish him and his able team every success in their endeavors.

Madam Chairperson,

Persons from more than 150 ethnic groups reside in Latvia. Around 35% of Latvia's population belong to ethnic minorities.

The education system of Latvia delivers state-financed bilingual or multilingual programs in Latvian and 7 ethnic minority languages (Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, Belarussian, Hebrew, Lithuanian and Estonian), as well as in English and French. Latvia continues and will continue to finance bilingual education programs for persons belonging to national minorities in the aforementioned 7 minority languages.

In Latvia there are more TV programs in national minority and foreign languages than there are in Latvian.

And those are just a few facts and examples of Latvia's commitment to ensure the rights of persons belonging to national minorities to preserve their language and culture.

Madam Chairperson,

Before concluding, we would like to note with regret the misleading comments expressed earlier today by the Russian delegation regarding Latvia.

For example, citizenship status and person's ethnicity are two different concepts and the attempt to show those concepts as equal is simply wrong.

Latvia is a country where human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, are respected. Latvia not only protects but also widely supports national minority languages, education and culture.

In conclusion, let me once again thank the High Commissioner on National Minorities for his work and his first report and wish the High Commissioner and his able team every success in future endeavors. I reconfirm Latvia's commitment to continue our successful cooperation.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson, and kindly asked my statement to be attached to the Journal of the Day.