

PC.DEL/1054/14
8 September 2014

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1015th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 September 2014

Regarding the denial of entry into Latvia of Mr. Igor Panevkin

Mr. Chairperson,

A few days ago at Riga airport, Mr. Igor Panevkin, head of the Fund to Support and Protect the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad, was denied entry into Latvia as he was on his way to the Seventh Conference of Organizations of Russian Compatriots in Latvia and was forced to return to Moscow.

This outrage, along with other unneighbourly acts by the officials in Riga in recent times in connection with citizens of the Russian Federation, cannot but give rise to indignation. We regard acts like this as further confirmation of the discriminatory policy of the Latvian authorities with regard to national minorities, as manifested in these attempts to prevent a representative of a Russian non-profit organization from attending a meeting with compatriots.

I understand that Latvia is a member of the European Union, which strongly advocates freedom of activity for non-profit organizations in Russia and their unhampered financing from abroad. We would therefore be interested to know what our colleagues think of this case. Is this an attempt by Riga to obstruct co-operation by the Fund with Russian compatriots and to limit its assistance in preserving the native language and culture and its legal support in defending their legal rights provided for in OSCE, United Nations and Council of Europe norms? Many countries engage in this kind of co-operation with diasporas. Latvia also has such a programme.

It is a matter of great regret that Russian humanitarian support to compatriots is regarded by Latvia as hostile and aimed at the formation of some kind of "fifth column". This can be seen, for example, in the 2013 annual report of the Latvian security police.

It is also a matter of regret that these manifestations of a discriminatory policy – the preservation of mass statelessness, covert differences in the rights of citizens and non-citizens, prosecution of dissidence, disregard for OSCE commitments on freedom of movement and human contacts – are concealed consistently by the bureaucrats of the

European Union, which attempts in every possible way to profile itself as an advocate of fundamental freedoms and human rights in other countries.

It could be for this very reason that the Latvian authorities allow themselves the inexplicable right to refuse entry to persons they wish to accuse of representing some kind of spurious threat. Such is the case with famous Russian artists going to the New Wave festival and the distinguished head of a human rights organization, whom no one could accuse of having made hostile or unneighbourly comments about this country.

We urge the European Union to give due consideration to Riga's policies, which are in violation of international commitments on freedom of movement, human contacts, protection of the rights of national minorities and promotion of human rights.

Thank you for your attention.