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**STATEMENT BY MR. VLADIMIR ZHEGLOV,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1323rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 July 2021

In connection with the United States Department of State's report on the global situation with regard to trafficking in human beings

Madam Chairperson,

In connection with the United States Department of State's latest report on the global situation with regard to trafficking in human beings, I should like to make the following comments.

We have repeatedly stressed that reviews of this type cannot be regarded as serious documents enabling readers to get an objective picture of what is going on in the field of anti-trafficking. The report's content, once again prepared on the basis of data from dubious sources, clearly betrays its political subtext. The document is replete with unverified facts, assumptions and speculation. Conclusions and recommendations were evidently put together even before the collected material had been analysed. In short, it does not stand up to criticism. The report does not do justice to either the political slogans spouted by the United States of America in the fight against this global phenomenon or to the huge scale of the problem in the United States itself.

Once again, the US representatives, arrogating to themselves the role of the "world's prosecutor", have attempted to divide the world into first-, second- and in this case also third-class States. Then, on the basis of this classification, "villains" are singled out, who are to be subjected arbitrarily to various kinds of punitive measures, including the notorious use of sanctions, by means of the extraterritorial application of US domestic law.

The shambolic nature of the material in the section on Russia, including the various facts torn out of context and the hackneyed politicized arguments, does not stand up to criticism. The Russian law enforcement agencies are actively working to combat trafficking in human beings throughout our country – also as part of international co-operation efforts. Notably, we have shared our experience on several occasions at the high-level conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons. The last time was in June of this year. We reiterate that tangible results are obtained through interaction between specialist departments aimed at investigating specific crimes, and not through the compilation of the aforementioned "country ratings". The latter clearly does not help to establish normal contacts between experts from different countries.

When it comes to such a serious issue as trafficking in human beings it is essential, in our view, to engage in thorough, responsible and depoliticized work. The dire situation in the United States itself ought to induce the US Government to reconsider seriously its approaches in this field. For in that country – as noted in various assessments, including some that have been voiced at the OSCE – one can observe a soaring level of trafficking in, and sexual exploitation of, children. Not to mention other systemic problems, such as those linked to the situation of millions of migrants, including children, entering the United States through its southern borders. Tackling the problem of trafficking is not made any easier either by the irresponsible actions of a number of Western countries (among them yet again the United States) in the Middle East and North Africa, as a result of which large numbers of people have been forced to abandon their homes, with many of them becoming victims of those who trade in “human commodities”.

Trafficking in human beings is very much a global problem: it poses a serious threat to all countries and therefore calls for an integrated response. Only constructive co-operation, also at the international level, rather than dubious “ratings”, can ensure that it is tackled successfully.

Thank you for your attention.