

PC.DEL/710/10
2 July 2010

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 July 2010

**Regarding the statement by the Secretary General
of the Council of Europe**

Mr. Chairperson,

We have carefully listened to the statement by Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland on the main aspects of improving the work of the Council of Europe and are grateful for his detailed assessments, throwing useful additional light on the priorities of the Macedonian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which were spelled out in this room on 10 June by the Macedonian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Antonio Milošoski.

Mr. Secretary General,

The view presented of the reform of the Council of Europe stimulates heightened interest in this matter. As you are aware, Russia supports the policy you are pursuing in strengthening the political role of this veteran organization and enhancing its role in the pan-European institutional architecture. We hope that the reform will also lead to the strengthening of the leading position played by the Council of Europe in the formation of a common humanitarian and human-rights space on the European continent.

We agree that there is a need to modernize the Council of Europe, as indeed any other international organization, in view of the modern-day challenges to security. At the same time, it is important that the planned internal reforms should not be detrimental to such topical areas of work as social cohesion and development and combating new threats or have a negative effect on such important spheres of the Council's activities as culture and education.

As for the second integral part of the reform process, namely the expansion of the Council's collaboration with the European Union and the OSCE, we take a fundamental position in favour of mutually beneficial co-operation on the basis of equal rights. We hope that the Council of Europe will remain an autonomous organization independent from other integration associations, where the interests of all the States making up the Council are taken into account.

On the other hand, we trust that the Council of Europe will not duplicate the work of, and still less compete with, other multilateral structures, notably the United Nations and the OSCE, as it tries to deal with the problems involved in the political aspects of various conflicts. In that connection, we have nothing against assistance from the Council of Europe, within the framework of its competence, in resolving humanitarian problems in the Caucasus, for instance. In this regard, Russia takes a positive view of the efforts of the Council of Europe's High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Thomas Hammarberg, to alleviate the situation of many inhabitants of the region. At the same time, concern needs to be shown for all those who have suffered and are in need of assistance.

With respect to your intention, Mr. Secretary General, to strengthen the monitoring mechanisms of the Council of Europe, we might recall that Russia is actively co-operating with the relevant Council of Europe bodies. They include the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance and the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. I would add that the Russian Federation is one of the few countries that have undertaken to protect all the peoples and ethnic groups living on its territory, unlike a number of European States, in which a total of between four and ten such groups fall under the aforementioned Convention.

We believe that the Council of Europe and the OSCE could improve their co-operation in resolving such acute problems as mass statelessness and the rise in xenophobia and neo-Nazi manifestations. Another sphere for joint efforts is assistance in eliminating visa barriers left over from the past and still in force in Europe, which hinder the formation of a common pan-European space and the exercise of the fundamental human right to freedom of movement.

We firmly believe that a resolution of these issues as quickly as possible will be conducive in practice to the building of a truly united and future-oriented Europe.

We should like to wish you, Mr. Secretary General, every success in your multidisciplinary work in the interests of all European peoples.

Thank you for your attention.