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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,  
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AT THE 939th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

31 January 2013

**Regarding International Holocaust Remembrance Day, also the  
anniversary of the lifting of the siege of Leningrad**

On 27 January, the world community observed two significant anniversaries connected with tragic chapters in the history of the Second World War.

It is symbolic that the lifting of the siege of Leningrad, which claimed over a million innocent lives, and the international day for remembrance of the Holocaust, a horrific event in the history of the Jewish people, are commemorated on the same day. On that day, the Soviet army liberated those left alive in the Auschwitz concentration camp. And on the very same day, Soviet troops succeeded in fully lifting the siege of Leningrad. Hitler's resolve to wipe the city on the Neva off the face of the Earth and to destroy all Jewish people was based on the same misanthropic Nazi ideology. As a tribute to the memory of the victims of the siege of Leningrad and the Holocaust, we should join forces today to prevent the revival of racist ideologies of that ilk.

In our country, the memory of all Great Patriotic War victims is deeply honoured and all possible support given to veterans, concentration camp and ghetto prisoners, siege survivors and home front workers. We are extremely grateful for the work of a number of OSCE States in this area, in particular the German funds paying compensation and benefits to the victims of Nazism. In our view, it would be fair to extend the practice of compensating Jewish survivors the siege of Leningrad to all siege survivors, especially since there are so few of them left.

Profound respect and support are also due to work to preserve the historical truth about the Holocaust, carried out both in Russia and in many OSCE States. The same respect is owing to the anti-Hitler coalition fighters, the Soviet soldiers who died liberating Europe from fascism, delivering not only Jews but also many other peoples from total annihilation. This attitude is clearly reflected in, for example, the inauguration of a memorial to Soviet fighters in the Israeli town of Netanya in June 2012 and of the world's largest Jewish museum and tolerance centre in November 2012 in Moscow, attended by the presidents of Russia and Israel.

Today, it is extremely important to remember the lessons of the Second World War and not to admit any lapses in moral standards, attempts to whitewash Nazism or to tout theories of racial purity and supremacy once more.

Unfortunately, in many OSCE States, racism, anti-Semitism and neo-Nazism are on the rise. Worrying symptoms are the calls of participants at a meeting in Antwerp in November last year to herd the Jews to the gas chambers, the failure of the Ministry of Defence to respond to the requests of human rights activists to remove the swastika from the flag and insignia of the Finnish air force school and the defilement of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues in Italy, France and other countries.

Similar tendencies at the parliamentary level are especially worrying, including the well-known anti-Semitic statement by a Hungarian Jobbik party deputy and the proposal by a European Union representative in the European Union-Moldova Parliamentary Cooperation Committee to consider Ion Antonescu, a war criminal convicted at the Nuremberg trials, a Romanian national hero.

A further example is a recent initiative by Latvian deputies to draft a law on the status of persons mobilized during the Second World War. Unfortunately, the draft law is a continuation of the well-known policy of the Latvian authorities to reinforce the tendentious interpretation of the events of 1939–1945 that ignores reality. Despite the voluntary basis of membership in the Latvian SS volunteer legion, the draft law envisages legitimizing the status of the former SS members as persons who were effectively victims of mobilization into SS subdivisions. This is essentially an attempt to repudiate the Nuremberg trials' verdict that the legion was a criminal organization. Also the scope of the draft law does not cover anti-fascist veterans who were mobilized outside the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic, volunteers and veterans who are non-citizens.

The consequences of the Second World War have had the most direct impact on the course of world history and international relations. The establishment of the anti-Hitler coalitions was an unprecedented example of unity among States with different ideologies and political systems in the face of a lethal threat to mankind. All OSCE participating States should demonstrate a similar approach to combating new threats and challenges.

In 2004, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 59/26 declaring 8 and 9 May “a time of remembrance and reconciliation”, and invited all United Nations member States “to observe annually either one or both of these days in an appropriate manner to pay tribute to all victims of the Second World War”. Since the observation of 9 May this year coincides with a regular Permanent Council meeting, and all 57 OSCE participating States are United Nations members, we propose that combating racism, neo-Nazism and misanthropic ideologies are discussed at that meeting as a way of implementing that General Assembly resolution.