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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY RUDENKO,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 959th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 July 2013

**Regarding the draft law concerning propaganda advocating
non-traditional sexual relations among minors**

Mr. Chairperson,

We take note of our colleagues' interest in the law-making process in our country.

On 30 June of this year, the President of Russia, Mr. Vladimir Putin, signed not one but two laws – one protecting children from information that is harmful to their health and development and another prohibiting adoption by same-sex couples.

Both of these laws are intended to guarantee children a harmonious and decent upbringing and protect their immature minds from possible adverse external influence. The aim of these initiatives is to protect children but by no means to restrict the rights of sexual minorities, which are guaranteed by the Constitution as are the rights of all other citizens.

The main goal of the laws is to create a comprehensive system for ensuring children's rights and to protect their morality and morals in strict accordance with Article 18, paragraph 4, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that "States undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions." According to opinion polls, 90 per cent of the Russian population are committed to traditional family values. We, unlike several European Union countries, listen to the views of our citizens.

We should also like to draw attention to the fact that attempts by our colleagues to present the situation in such a way as to suggest that virtually the entire European Union population unanimously supports the idea of abandoning the traditional understanding of the institution of family and marriage are not in keeping with reality. This is confirmed by the rallies in France attended by millions of opponents of same-sex marriages and the adoption of children by same-sex couples.

Not everything is clear-cut in the Scandinavian countries either, as was shown by the recent demonstrations outside the local child custody service building in the Norwegian city

of Trondheim when thousands of citizens protested against the new government programme providing, among other things, for the possibility of adoption by same-sex couples. In that same connection, we did not notice the voice of millions of citizens supporting traditional family values in the European Union being heard.

I might add that in the United States of America, as far as we are aware, same-sex marriages have been recognized in only 13 states, and by no means all American citizens support the rapid movement towards same-sex couples having the same rights as traditional families, in particular the decision on this subject by the United States Supreme Court. Among them are such respected persons as the president of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, Austin Ruse, the lawyer Scott Lively and others.

It is surprising how freely our United States colleagues interpret our other laws, each time perceiving discrimination against new groups. For example, on this occasion they have seen in the ruling by St. Petersburg courts on violations of the law on non-profit organizations by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights (LGBT) organizations “Coming Out” and “Side by Side” a violation of the rights of sexual minorities. We are compelled to repeat the banal truth – everyone is equal before the law. We see no reason for any exceptions for LGBT associations. If a particular organization has received foreign funding since the entry into force of the law, as was the case for instance with the “Side by Side” film festival organization receiving funding from the Netherlands, it is obliged to register accordingly. It is for the courts to determine whether the organization’s activities are concerned with domestic politics, and no one has the right to influence the adoption of rulings by the judicial system. Both of the aforementioned organizations are fully entitled to appeal against the courts’ decisions at a higher level.

As for the concerns of our United States colleagues regarding the rally held in St. Petersburg on 29 June in defence of LGBT rights, we should like to say the following. In view of the conflict that erupted between representatives of sexual minorities and opponents of the aforementioned action, the police detained rioters on both sides. They were all released once police reports had been drawn up. Two police officers were also injured during the rioting. In view of the fact that the event was held in violation of the law, the Dzerzhinskiy District Court in St. Petersburg will consider a case of administrative responsibility against its organizer Yury Gavrikov.

We believe that instead of incessantly exaggerating the importance of topics for which there are neither commitments nor a common view in the OSCE it would be worth paying more attention to combating paedophilia and sexual and domestic violence against children and to protecting the rights of children of mixed parentage and children in foster or adoptive families. Perhaps it is time to also think about drafting a Ministerial Council decision on this subject.

There are more than enough grounds for doing so. The alarming facts contained in the United Nations report on the situation as regards ensuring children’s rights around the world, including OSCE States, are well known. Furthermore, in several countries, including European ones, the actions of the authorities intended to protect children’s rights frequently lead to real family tragedies. We all remember the notorious scandals of mothers being denied the right to see their own children or the unjustified removal of children of mixed parentage from families in Finland, France and Norway.

At the special meeting of the Permanent Council on Tuesday, the future Chairperson-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Switzerland Mr. Didier Burkhalter, rightly noted that we need to give more thought to young people because they are our future. We fully support his appeal.

Thank you for your attention.