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PC.DEL/779/23

8 June 2023

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1428th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 June 2023

On destructive working methods in the OSCE

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to draw the attention of participating States to the unacceptable working methods of the Chairmanship-in-Office of North Macedonia.

We have already repeatedly pointed out the reprehensible practice put in place just last year by the Polish Chairmanship in flagrant violation of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE and the provisions of Porto Ministerial Council Decision No. 8 on the role of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office. Now North Macedonia, backed by Poland, is trampling on the fundamental principle of consensus in the adoption of decisions.

First, after failing to agree on a draft Permanent Council decision on the holding of the 31st OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum this year, North Macedonia decided to hold it as a Chairmanship event. Now the situation has repeated itself with the OSCE Asian Conference. Without any consultation, the draft Permanent Council decisions on the holding of the conference were submitted to the Preparatory Committee on 6 June. Having listened to constructive and perfectly valid comments from a number of participating States, and in particular from major regional players, the Polish Chairmanship of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group simply brushed them aside, saying that in the absence of consensus they would hold the event under the auspices of the Chairmanship-in-Office. Incidentally, we would recall that Poland's term of office at the helm of our Organization ended at the end of last year.

The picture is just as deplorable in the human dimension, which has once again become hostage to the unscrupulous approaches of the Chairmanships. North Macedonia decided to repeat the fiasco of its predecessors last year and undermine all of the work within the third "basket". It has violated every possible provision of its mandate and the relevant Permanent Council decisions, above all Decision No. 241 (1998) and Decision No. 476 (2002), not to mention the established practice within the Organization. We talked about this in detail today during the Preparatory Committee meeting, so we will not repeat it.

Instead of events whose agenda and organizational and technical modalities reflect the views of all 57 participating States, we are witnessing unprincipled substitute events. Take, for example, the conference

on justice for torture victims, held on 2 June in the Hofburg Ratsaal. This “initiative” by Denmark and Switzerland was for some reason on the general OSCE timetable. And it was designated as an “international conference” under the auspices of North Macedonia and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

The event, held at the Organization’s headquarters with the participation of representatives of its executive structure and the Chairmanship-in-Office was supposed to be a platform for an informed exchange of views by all participants on all issues related to torture in the OSCE area. However, all we could see was the provocative behaviour of an ODIHR official and the representative of Switzerland, for whom the attempt to discuss anything other than the anti-Russian agenda was unacceptable. We should like to know how this is to be interpreted. As mere discourteousness? Or as an attempt by the ODIHR, in the framework of a conference devoted to the issue, to hush up the question of prisoners detained without charge or trial at the infamous Guantánamo Bay prison, for example? Or perhaps as encouragement for the ill-treatment of migrants and refugees, which could be described as torture, by a number of European Union Member States? In any case, we assume that the ODIHR leadership will draw the appropriate conclusions. North Macedonia’s promotion of anti-Russian gatherings runs counter to the mandate of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office and needs to be rectified.

Such attempts to take the work of our Organization into a parallel reality, where the Rules of Procedure, the principle of consensus in decision-making, and the “laws” of the established practice do not apply, are completely unacceptable and undermine the collective foundations of the OSCE.

Thank you for your attention.