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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1512th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 March 2025

**In response to the report by the Director of the
OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

Mr. Chairperson,
Madam Director,

We have carefully read the report presented by you and should like to comment on it.

The attitude of the newly appointed head of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and her first steps towards establishing constructive co-operation with representatives of all the OSCE participating States warrant a positive assessment.

Unfortunately, Ms. Maria Telalian has been handed a legacy of accumulated systemic problems in the ODIHR's work. Under the leadership of your predecessors, Madam Director, this executive structure was literally turned into a tool for servicing the short-term interests of the collective West. As for human rights, they were routinely used as a pretext for interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign States.

It is utterly unacceptable that the Office should have been insensible to egregious violations of human rights in Western countries and their "satellites". These include widespread discrimination against Russian and Russian-speaking people, not least through the revocation of residence permits and the stripping of citizenship, and curtailment of electoral rights – all of which have a direct bearing on the ODIHR's mandate. Particularly despicable in that regard are the racist legislative amendments in Estonia aimed at depriving the "undesirable" part of that country's population of their electoral rights.

And what can one say of the complete "Ukrainization" of the Office? To suit the Kyiv regime's interests, it has been simply ignoring murders, torture, abductions and other crimes committed against, among others, civilians and parishioners and clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. It is also worth mentioning the ODIHR's morbid fixation with issues of international humanitarian law. These issues should above all be discussed at relevant international platforms.

We would be hard put to think of anyone who has done more harm to the credibility of the ODIHR and the OSCE as a whole than your predecessors, Ms. Telalian. Without cleaning up the Augean stables, there is no way of putting right this dismal situation.

The lamentable picture being painted here is to a great extent also due to the defectiveness of the existing election observation methodology. Now, the ODIHR was originally created for the very purpose of monitoring elections in the CSCE/OSCE area.

It is impossible not to ask by what criteria the Office is guided when selecting countries to comment on. Why do the recent elections in Belarus and Tajikistan, which were splendidly organized and have been declared valid, come in for critical scrutiny from the ODIHR, while no complaints are made about Romania, for example, where shocking things are happening in the electoral arena?

The Russian Federation has been consistently calling for consensus-based election observation principles to start to be developed. As long ago as 2007, in the run-up to the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid, a joint proposal was submitted for a draft Ministerial Council decision on “Basic Principles for the Organization of OSCE/ODIHR Observation of National Elections”. It is high time to start discussing that draft again.

The Office has traditionally accorded a prominent place to the topic of anti-Semitism. We expect similarly close attention to be paid to efforts to combat intolerance towards Christians and Muslims as well. We would remind you that the tasking from the 2014 Basel Ministerial Council meeting with regard to drafting declarations on combating discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions has yet to be implemented to this day.

We call upon the Office to also focus on combating racism, racial discrimination, the glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and the falsification of history, and on the importance of preserving historical and cultural heritage. This is especially relevant as we approach the 80th anniversary of victory in the Second World War.

We believe that it would be in everyone’s interest to start negotiating, with the ODIHR’s expert assistance, the full “package” of human dimension events for this year. This work must be performed in strict accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Organization and relevant Ministerial Council and Permanent Council decisions.

We reiterate our position of principle that it is necessary to move OSCE human dimension events and the headquarters of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to a location outside Poland. Incidentally, today’s statement by the representative of that country says it all. We would be curious to know by what right Poland allowed itself to make several utterly unacceptable and offensive comments about a number of sovereign States. It is a rhetorical question. The holding of an ersatz event yet again cannot be regarded as a substitute for the Organization’s Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

In the year of the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act it is to be hoped that there will be a revival of a genuine spirit of co-operation between the OSCE participating States, and likewise that the Organization will find its way back to its roots.

We should like to wish you, Ms. Telalian, success in your delicate mission in the service of our unique Organization and its participating States.

Thank you for your attention.