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

8 June 2023

**In response to the special address by the
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, H.E. Mr. Volker Türk**

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Permanent Council. We have listened carefully to the statement by Mr. Volker Türk and should like to comment on it.

This year sees the commemoration of several events of landmark importance for all humanity, with the leading role undoubtedly falling to the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has become a generally recognized, global standard in human rights promotion and protection and gave the impetus for the creation and development of a new field of law, that is, international human rights law. Nor can one fail to mention another, no less important document, namely the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the 30th anniversary of which we are also celebrating this year and which unequivocally enshrined the key axioms that all rights must be treated equally and that it is unacceptable to diminish the importance of some rights by overstating that of others. Russia fully supports such an approach.

Mr. Chairperson,

Unfortunately, as we look back and assess today what has been done in terms of protecting and promoting human rights, we are obliged to note that negative trends continue to gather momentum. This has, in many respects, been facilitated by the activities of the Western alliance countries, which have long been making use of human rights issues to criticize “undesirable” countries and meddle in the internal affairs of sovereign States. It is at their instigation that, under the guise of protecting the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly, a blind eye is turned to gatherings of former Waffen-SS legionnaires, to the glorification of Nazism, to neo-Nazi antics and manifestations of religious intolerance.

Unfortunately, international human rights institutions and structures are not immune to all this. Political bias and geographical imbalances have increasingly come to predominate in their work as well. The OSCE participating States are well acquainted with such approaches. In our Organization these approaches have been followed by one of the OSCE executive structures, namely the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), pretty much since the ODIHR was created in the early 1990s. The OSCE

Chairmanships over the past two years have been behaving in a similar fashion, completely rejigging our Organization's work to suit the interests and attitudes of the EU bloc and the US Government.

High Commissioner,

The situation in the Office under your charge also remains most dismal. One gets the impression that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) – like the High Commissioner as such – has lost its neutrality and turned into both an instrument for serving the interests of Western States and a mouthpiece for their one-sided propagandist rhetoric. Our hopes that, under your leadership, the shortcomings in the OHCHR's work during the tenure of your predecessors would be rectified and that its engagement with States would be based on constructive dialogue and co-operation have yet to be fulfilled.

We are obliged to note that, since 2014, the OHCHR has invariably been displaying a biased and one-sided attitude towards the deteriorating human rights situation in Ukraine. For many years now it has been ignoring the authorities' repressive policies against national minorities and the Russian-speaking population; the flagrant flouting of their rights; the denial of freedom of expression; the persecution and assassination of opposition politicians and publicists, as well as priests from the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and the harassment of independent media outlets; rampant neo-Nazism; and the Ukrainian armed forces' shelling of Donbas. The regular public statements by Kyiv regime officials calling for the "killing [of] Russians anywhere on the face of this world" have not been deemed worthy of attention. There are no public assessments of the Ukrainian Government's terrorist activities against Ukraine's own population.

When preparing reports on the human rights situation in Ukraine, the OHCHR deliberately passes over several important aspects. The authors throw a veil over the fact that Western countries are supplying the Kyiv regime with weapons that are being used by the Ukrainian armed forces against the civilian population in Donbas and other Russian regions, and against civilian and critical infrastructure facilities. The extent of the brutality of the Ukrainian authorities and soldierly rabble is being ignored, despite the materials regularly sent by Russia in connection with relevant crimes in Donbas, namely the atrocities committed by Ukrainian fighters and foreign mercenaries. Nor has there been an appropriate response from the OHCHR to the videos appearing on the Internet that show Russian prisoners of war being tortured by the Ukrainian armed forces.

Similarly, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has completely discredited itself. As you know, it was created in 2014 as a result of bilateral agreements between the Ukrainian Government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights at the time. Need one point out that most of the Mission's staff are "locally" recruited Ukrainian citizens whose political views and preferences are quite predictable? Nobody even tries to conceal this any longer.

We once again call upon you and the Office headed by you to refrain from politicizing the situation in Ukraine, to take an honest and objective look at the events unfolding there and assess them in a principled and impartial manner. We understand that it will not be easy to do this. However, such a step is essential if the OHCHR is to preserve its reputation as an objective and impartial organizational unit of the United Nations Secretariat.

High Commissioner,

The topic of Ukraine is by no means the only one with regard to which the OHCHR is not pulling its weight. For example, we are not aware of any reaction on its part to massive human rights violations in

member countries of the European Union and in the United States of America. Nor have we heard the High Commissioner condemn the violent dispersal of demonstrations in Leipzig and The Hague last week, or the continued arbitrariness of police in France towards protesters.

The systemic problems associated with the gross trampling on the rights of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia and Estonia require your close attention, as does the persistence of the shameful phenomenon of mass statelessness there. For example, very strict requirements have been laid down in Latvia with regard to knowledge and use of the State language, and also with regard to passing a corresponding exam. Russian-speaking citizens of Latvia find themselves restricted in, or deprived of, a number of fundamental rights. A consistent policy is being pursued to remove the Russian language from the system of school education. A veritable “war” is being waged against monuments to the Soviet soldier-liberators and even against common graves for soldiers.

In Estonia, as part of a State policy of “Estonianizing” all spheres of public life, the assimilation of Russian-speaking children is under way and these are being deprived of the right to receive education in their native language. The State is taking measures to squeeze the Russian language out of all spheres of school and preschool education. The Estonian language development programme covering the period 2021–2035 and the “Estonia 2035” strategy provide for teaching at State and municipal educational institutions to switch entirely to Estonian no later than 2035.

Using a predictable pretext, a full-scale campaign to eradicate everything “Russian” has of late been under way in the Baltic countries and other European Union Member States, and also in Moldova. Civil society activists, journalists and pro-Russian political figures are ostracized and arrested. Attempts are made, under overtly Russophobic slogans, to call into question the results of elections in certain constituent entities of countries. The public space is being purged of Russian and Russian-language media in the name of creating a sterile information landscape. The scale of the discrimination is terrifying. The problems of oppression of the Russian and Russian-speaking population are directly relevant to your Office, which the Member States of the United Nations tasked with combating racism and racial discrimination. In that regard, we invite you, the staff of your Office and all participating States to study the latest report by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the human rights situation in certain countries, which was published on the Ministry’s website on 6 June. We also intend to circulate that document at the OSCE.

High Commissioner,

We call upon you to avoid using inaccurate information and dubious testimonies and facts, and to refrain from making shrill, one-sided and politicized assessments. It seems to us that otherwise not only will trust in the institution headed by you be undermined, but international co-operation in the field of human rights as a whole will be discredited too. Only joint constructive work by all the parties concerned, by the United Nations Member States and the OSCE participating States, on the basis of collective principles and building on the Charter of the United Nations and the tenets of international law can enable headway to be made in the universal implementation of standards.

Thank you for your attention.