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PC.DEL/694/24
13 June 2024

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1478th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 June 2024

In response to the report by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Mr. Chairperson,

In December 2020, when Ms. Teresa Ribeiro took up her post as OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Russia was counting on the new head of this executive structure to approach the fulfilment of her mandate conscientiously, without geographical distortions and imbalances. I will not hide the fact that we had hoped that she would take into account the mistakes of her predecessors and approach the assessment of the media situation in the participating States without politicization and bias, on the basis of criteria that are transparent and understandable to all.

Since Ms. Ribeiro took up her post, we have made an effort in good faith to establish constructive dialogue with the Office, with regular meetings and extensive communication. We have pointed out our concerns to her, but the answer has always been the same: “The issue is being dealt with within the framework of the Representative’s practice of quiet diplomacy.” At the same time, for some reason, this principle has not been observed with regard to Russia, and adverse public comments have been made about us on a regular basis. This selectiveness in the reactions of Ms. Ribeiro’s Office has clearly done nothing to rectify the difficult situation in the media space of some participating States, but has only exacerbated it. Its silence has given the wrongdoers carte blanche to commit further offences in relation to journalists and freedom of the media.

Since the start of the special operation in Ukraine in February 2022, our dialogue with the Representative has ceased altogether. She has not consulted us, she has not tried to obtain first-hand information, and she has refused to listen to the Russian point of view on what is happening in the media space. Ms. Ribeiro has stopped even pretending to respect the mandate given to her by the 57 participating States and has begun blatantly, without attempting to examine the substance of the issues, to act in the interests of her Western handlers, agreeing with their unfounded Russophobic statements.

The most vivid example of this is the situation with freedom, or rather unfreedom of speech in Ukraine. All Russian-language media are banned in the country, and hatred of everything Russian is openly promoted on national and regional channels. And this is in a country where Russian is the native language of a significant part of the population. Moreover, reporters who have a point of view different from that

disseminated by the authorities are harassed, arrested and even killed. As was stated by Maksim Vilkov of the Information Group on Crimes against the Person at the second OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, at least 30,000 people have been arrested in the country for “dissent” alone. The dire situation of journalists in Ukraine has also been noted by a number of Western publications that can hardly be accused of loving Russia, or, as it is fashionable to say nowadays, of “spreading Russian disinformation and propaganda”. For example, the magazine *Politico* confirms that journalists, including those who expose corruption in the country, have been subjected to unlawful reprisals. “Reporters find themselves quickly dubbed Russian agents, draft dodgers and enemies of Ukraine. [...] They use different intimidation tactics to try to deter reporters and then, of course, they can always threaten to ship you off to the front lines.” This is a quote. Yet our Representative on Freedom of the Media remains obstinately silent. What is this if not a deliberate suppression of the problems of the professional community in favour of the interests of the Kyiv regime?

It is no secret to anyone that for you, Ms. Ribeiro, the lives of Russian reporters are of no value and therefore not worthy of your attention. Otherwise, how else are we to explain that the names of the murdered Russian journalists, such as the *Izvestia* correspondent Semyon Eremin, who was killed in April of this year in a targeted attack by the Kyiv regime’s armed formations, have never been mentioned in any of your statements, comments or posts on social media.

Other instances of discrimination against representatives of Russia’s media community have long been overlooked in the Office of the current Representative. These include the closure of Russian and Russian-language media in Moldova and the Baltic States, bans on participation in events, withdrawal of accreditation and denial of entry to European Union countries. And how many examples have there been of Western online platforms violating the rights of Russian journalists by blocking their accounts without explanation? And the unlawful sanctions? In fact, Ms. Ribeiro, you have never found the courage to comment on the European Union’s restrictions on Russian sources of information and the resultant denial of access by Europeans to the full range of news. It is worth noting that this issue was raised repeatedly by European civil society activists even during the most recent OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting. I recall that in May three more Russian media outlets – *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, *Izvestia* and the RIA Novosti news agency – were added to the EU sanctions list.

If you, Ms. Ribeiro, think our media are “wrong” and do not need to be protected, one wonders who gave you the right to make such judgements and censor sources of information. I would emphasize again that the Representative’s mandate does not say a word about this, nor about your perceived “autonomy”. The structure you lead is meant to serve the interests of all 57 participating States equally, and not just those of a small group of countries.

To sum up, we are compelled to state that the current Representative has failed in her work, shown her professional unsuitability, and contributed to making media issues in our Organization one of the most politicized topics on the current agenda. We shall be more careful and scrupulous in selecting a new Representative so as to prevent a repetition of such an occurrence in the future.

Thank you for your attention.