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PC.DEL/1657/22
3 November 2022

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1397th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 November 2022

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

Mr. Chairperson,
Ms. Ribeiro,

In a couple of days, namely on 5 November, the executive structure headed by you will celebrate its 25th anniversary. The passage of a quarter of a century is a good opportunity to take stock and reflect, but also to make plans for the future. In our view, given the gross violations of your mandate by you, the current Representative on Freedom of the Media, and also the systematic geographical and thematic imbalances in your activities, such reflection is particularly called for.

We are obliged to note that both of the reports presented at the Permanent Council this year have left a disappointing impression. What we are dealing with here is the deepening of a crisis caused by a definitive break with the principle of impartiality and even-handedness, as well as by an abandonment of professionalism in the implementation of one's mandate. To say nothing of the numerous instances in which the post of Media Representative and the mandate of that institution have been deliberately used in attempts to discredit Russia and promote non-consensus, confrontational concepts.

For example, it is a mystery to us on what basis the Representative on Freedom of the Media feels entitled to make any characterizations of the Russian special military operation and, what is more, to do so using the vocabulary of Ukrainian propaganda. Numerous public remarks attest to the politicization and bias of her Office's work. Not to mention the fact that the statutory documents for the executive structure headed by her, above all Permanent Council Decision No. 193 of 5 November 1997, did not authorize the Media Representative to make assessments in the field of security, to draw conclusions about the legitimacy of referendums conducted by participating States, or to go around pinning labels in line with the political directives of a small group of OSCE participating States.

We believe that it is necessary for Ms. Teresa Ribeiro to finally concentrate on fulfilling her immediate obligations. For example, to begin engaging in geographically balanced monitoring of the situation with regard to press freedom and the safety of journalists. As may currently be observed, the Media Representative is systematically ignoring crimes against Russian journalists and media outlets. She did not deign to react to the brutal murder of the journalist Darya Dugina by the Ukrainian intelligence services. She

took no notice of the death of the Russian journalist Oleg Klovov as a result of the Ukrainian armed forces' deliberate shelling of a civilian river crossing across the Dnieper in Kherson on 21 October this year, which was carried out using US-made HIMARS high-precision missiles. The Media Representative has also remained silent on the numerous terrorist acts targeting journalists and media outlets, such as the explosion near the editorial office of the television company ZaTV in Melitopol on 25 October. Similarly, she has overlooked the innumerable threats against Russian journalists made by Ukrainian officials, including the top leaders of that country.

Such an attitude runs counter to paragraph 14 of Milan Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/18 on the safety of journalists. It is clearly stated there that the participating States agreed to "encourage the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media's continued advocacy and promotion of safety of journalists in all OSCE participating States, in line with his/her mandate". To be sure, the Kyiv regime and its Western supervisors have long been doing everything they can, even to the extent of employing extreme measures, to "encourage" you, Ms. Ribeiro, to step up your activities with regard to the protection of Russian journalists. However, one gets the impression for the time being that the Media Representative is more concerned about the fate of journalists from some OSCE participating States than she is about the fate of journalists from others.

At the same time, we are compelled to point out how it has become an entrenched practice for the Media Representative to react in a selective, deeply biased and inappropriate manner to the situation regarding freedom of speech and pluralism of opinions in the OSCE area.

The lack of a response to the instituting of total censorship in the information space of several Western OSCE participating States is baffling. Not to mention the lack of a response to the launching of undisguised persecution of alternative sources of information presenting points of view that differ from the Western narratives. Nor have you condemned the artificial creation of protective "information bubbles" there, filled with one-sided and tendentious content. It beggars belief that the Media Representative should not be aware of the fact that, as a result of illegitimate sanctions, the television channel Russia Today, the Sputnik news agency and several other Russian media outlets (Channel One, Rossiya 1, NTV, TASS, VGTRK, Rossiya Segodnya, National Media Group, Rossiya 24, Smotrim, Vesti.ru, Regnum, and others) have been prohibited from broadcasting and publishing in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States of America and the European Union. That no room could be found in the Media Representative's report for this unprecedented example of segregation of the global information space makes one wonder.

Instead, the report contains *de facto* praise for the Grand Chamber of the General Court of the Court of Justice of the European Union, which on 27 July upheld the restrictions against the television channel RT France. If you, Ms. Ribeiro, approve of this ruling by the arbiters of justice in Brussels, you must surely have studied, then, the evidence allegedly in the possession of those judges proving that RT France journalists were spreading disinformation and war propaganda? We would be very interested to see that evidence.

It is with concern that we note the increasingly frequent attempts at distortion of the facts and equivocation. A striking example of this is the raising of "concerns" over the sentencing of the "journalist" Ivan Safronov. He was arrested and convicted not for his past work as a journalist but for espionage. By putting out such unverified information you demonstrate that what you are seeking is not to solve problems but to artificially make them worse.

We are also concerned that the red flags highlighted by us during the Permanent Council meeting that dealt with the Media Representative's previous report have been completely ignored in this new report.

I am referring, for example, to the wholesale purging of any Russian media from the information space of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, or the catastrophic situation regarding press freedom in Ukraine.

In particular, there is no reaction to the media law that was recently approved at its first reading by the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament), whereby the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine has been empowered to restrict the activities of any media outlet without a court order. Many international associations of journalists have already voiced serious criticisms with regard to this new piece of legislation. However, it would seem that you take the approach that “Ukraine is different.” That would account also for the lack of critical commentary on the authorities of that country, which have eliminated all dissent by all imaginable and unimaginable means and now have a free hand to manipulate public opinion at will.

The situation in Lithuania, too, evidently falls under the category of “a different kettle of fish”. The Media Representative has simply ignored the amendments to the Public Information Act that were adopted by the Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament) on 22 September. These amendments prohibit the retransmission or dissemination on the Internet of any television and radio programmes created, directly or indirectly run, controlled or financed by Russian or Belarusian entities. We should point out that these restrictions were already to be found in the Parliament’s decision on the imposition of a state of emergency, which was in force until 16 September. However, the Lithuanian parliamentarians decided to go one step further and to legislatively enshrine this outrageous instrument of censorship – without using identified “violations” or Western “sanctions” as a smokescreen, as had hitherto been the case.

We have cited just a few of the most recent examples of the Media Representative’s divergent approaches. One could add endlessly to this list. In these circumstances it is legitimate to question the degree of functionality of this OSCE executive structure and the quality of the output of the Media Representative’s Office, including the report currently under consideration. For now, both the one and the other must be described as unsatisfactory and compromised. We once again call upon Ms. Ribeiro to stop politicizing the executive structure headed by her and to finally begin implementing her mandate objectively and without double standards.

Thank you for your attention.