



**Statement by Mr Uldis Mikuts, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Latvia, delivered in response to the statement by the Delegation of the Russian Federation**

Permanent Council No.1137,  
Vienna, 16 March 2017

Mr Chairman,

We take note of the statement made by distinguished representative of the Russian delegation.

During the Second World War and after that the Latvian state experienced occupations of two totalitarian regimes – that of Soviet Union and that of Nazi Germany. By means of brutal repressions, regular acts of terror, constant intimidation and subjection to indignities and humiliation during the World War II, each occupying power - each totalitarian regime in turn – by ignoring international law, illegally conscripted large numbers of Latvian citizens or forced them to join one or the other of their national armed forces.

Latvia has regularly and consistently condemned the crimes against humanity which were committed by both totalitarian regimes. Latvia categorically denounces the Holocaust as the most abhorrent crime of the Nazi regime and mourns its victims.

Former soldiers, who fought on one or the other side of the battlefield during the Second World War, remember their fallen comrades on different dates. Since the renewal of independence in 1991, the government of Latvia has been consistent in its approach – the state honours its fallen soldiers on 11 November, the day we remember our heroes.

As a democratic country, Latvia respects and ensures all fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of assembly. 16 March is not an official day of commemoration, it is a private initiative to pay respect to the fallen soldiers. Highest state officials and government representatives do not participate in the commemorative events, which gather participants in the centre of Riga.

In accordance to the assessment from the state police of Latvia the commemoration events in Riga today were peaceful and no breaches of public order, which would threaten security of participants, have been identified.

Mr Chairman,

The chapters of history are written not only in black and white. It is vital that a difference is drawn between those who perpetrated crimes and those who fell in combat at the battle front. Rather than digging lines of division deeper or falling prey to provocation, we must seek jointly to explore the tragic lessons of history. We must also keep this work off from becoming politicized and not allow dissemination of ideas of radicalisation and extremism.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.