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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1416th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 March 2023

On the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Mr. Chairperson,

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, is observed annually on 21 March. As is well known, that date was chosen to commemorate the victims of a tragic event in the Republic of South Africa. On that day in 1960, 69 people were killed by police during a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid regime's laws requiring blacks to carry internal passports.

This sad day of remembrance affords us all an opportunity to assess the current situation in this field. The picture that emerges is, let us be frank, hardly a rosy one. Problems of racism, racial discrimination, neo-Nazism, xenophobia and related intolerance continue to beset the OSCE area. The attempts by a number of participating States to justify these shameful phenomena by invoking the allegedly absolute nature of the right to freedom of expression or freedom of assembly are deeply concerning. The same is true of references to some sort of "high quality" of democracy, which presupposes impeccable observance of human rights and freedoms.

Moreover, these countries often adopt a lecturing attitude towards others, are behind the activation of human rights "mechanisms", assiduously propagate the "weighty" conclusions of these mechanisms and even relay hastily concocted fake stories and the sick fantasies of certain individuals. And all this instead of getting down to tackling real problems, of which, frankly, there are more than plenty in the self-proclaimed democracies of the "Premier League".

According to the annual report of ZARA Civil Courage and Anti-Racism-Work, a Vienna-based human rights group, no fewer than 1,479 racist incidents were recorded in Austria in 2022, of which 68 per cent took place on social media. The victims include blacks and Muslims.

A sorry state of affairs pertains in Ireland when it comes to countering racism. The Irish Network Against Racism, a non-governmental organization (NGO), reports that there were 600 incidents in which racism manifested itself in that country in 2022, up by one third from 2021. The organization's preliminary data for 2023 points to a deterioration of the situation.

In France, a recent study by the Representative Council of Black Associations (CRAN), an NGO that specializes in defending the interests of people of African descent, confirmed that nine in ten black respondents living in continental France had faced racial discrimination in everyday life. Nor is that country free of ethnic profiling among its law enforcement agencies. In June 2022, several international human rights bodies drew attention to the more than modest progress achieved in that area.

In late January, the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent noted that racism in the United Kingdom was structural, institutional and systemic, emphasizing how people of African descent encountered racial discrimination and erosion of their fundamental rights. The experts were concerned about the British authorities' failure to resolve this long-standing problem, for example in the criminal justice system. Impunity and inhuman treatment prevail there, in their view. There have also been some deaths.

In addition, the experts note how "there are barriers to accessing asylum in advance of arrival by people of African descent. Many asylum seekers of African descent often find themselves subject to punitive migration controls such as detention, denial of benefits, deportation ... Their state of precariousness is exacerbated by restriction of the right to work and basic needs such as health care, housing, and adequate food. Many of them reside in overcrowded, isolated facilities ..."

In a report published in March on the situation in Scotland Yard, Baroness Louise Casey, a former Victims' Commissioner, arrived at some distressing conclusions. To give a few quotes: "Black Londoners remain considerably more likely to be the victims of several serious and violent crimes than White Londoners." In addition, "there are people in the Met [the Metropolitan Police in London] with racist attitudes, and Black, Asian and ethnic minority officers and staff are more likely to experience racism, discrimination and bullying at their hands."

In August 2022, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination concluded that international legal standards pertaining to the fight against racism were not being observed in the United States of America. The Committee expressed its concern over "the brutality and excessive or deadly use of force by law enforcement officials against members of racial and ethnic minorities". This particularly affects people of African or Asian descent, Indigenous persons and undocumented migrants, among others.

The problem of systemic racism and violence on racial grounds in prisons is a long-standing one. This was confirmed yet again by the findings of a joint study by the NGO Prison Policy Initiative and the advocacy group The Sentencing Project.

Moreover, racism and discrimination affect even minors, a highly vulnerable population group. According to a report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) of November 2022 entitled "Rights Denied: The Impact of Discrimination on Children", that phenomenon is also widespread in the United States. The report draws attention to a lamentable situation in the field of education: when it comes to school disciplinary measures, black children are nearly four times more likely to receive out-of-school suspensions than white children and more than twice as likely to face school-related arrests.

In our view, the US Government must finally stop lecturing others and set about tackling its own chronic problems, which includes combating discrimination against children. We would recommend the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to turn its attention to the situation of minors in that participating State, rather than restricting its activities on the topic of children to two specific countries.

In Canada, another country from the Anglo-Saxon sphere, things are not so bright either. Just a couple of days ago, the Toronto Foundation and the Environics Institute released a research brief entitled “Everyday Racism: Experiences of Discrimination in Toronto”. In the brief it is pointed out that 76 per cent of black residents of that city had experienced discrimination. People of Asian descent were also likely to face discrimination.

The plight of the First Nations continues. According to recent findings by the United Nations Human Rights Council’s Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, Francisco Calí Tzay, despite the measures taken by the Canadian Government, Indigenous inhabitants of the country continue to face violations of their rights and other barriers, including the “appalling” legacy of residential schools and persisting violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Incidentally, Mr. Calí Tzay has also reached some depressing conclusions about the persistence of racism against the Inuits in Denmark (especially in Greenland). As reported by the Living History Forum, an NGO, Sweden, too, continues to be beset by the problem of racism – specifically against the Sami people on the grounds of their traditional economic activities.

Mr. Chairperson,

Nor do other tendencies linked to racism look to be disappearing from the OSCE area any time soon, namely the tendencies to falsify the history of the Second World War and to exonerate those who created and implemented the theory of racial superiority. They are par for the course in the Baltic countries, where the practice of honouring veterans of the Waffen-SS and all sorts of collaborators has become commonplace. Marches and gatherings of SS legionnaires and their supporters also take place there regularly. For example, just a few days ago, on 16 March, one such traditional gathering was held in Riga; it was attended by active politicians, leaders of radical right-wing parties and members of parliament. What is more, despite this being prohibited by law, the participants displayed Nazi symbols for everyone to see and laid flowers to commemorate fascist thugs.

We have cited just a few of the most recent examples of what is going on in the OSCE area. In our view, the problem of racism and racial discrimination, given its systemic nature in a number of countries, warrants close scrutiny from our Organization and its executive structures.

Thank you for your attention.