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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1482nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 July 2024

On the harmfulness of ersatz events for the OSCE human dimension

Madam Chairperson,

For the third year in a row, the countries of the Western alliance and their loyal satellites are continuing to deliberately push the OSCE's already failing human dimension into the abyss. As the Maltese Chairmanship announced at the end of June this year, the annual OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) will also not take place this year and will again be replaced by the so-called Warsaw Human Dimension Conference.

We are not surprised by this turn of events. Consensus on the 2024 HDIM was doomed from the outset. Its unenviable fate was due to the absence of consultation of any kind with all participating States, the unserious attitude of the organizers regarding the legitimate demands of individual countries, and the violation by the Chairmanship of the established practice and commitments of the Organization with regard to agreeing on a "package" of human dimension events.

Russia fought to the last to put an end to the practice of holding fake ersatz events in the OSCE. However, we were unable in the human dimension to repeat the success we had managed to achieve in the second "basket".

As a result, instead of a credible OSCE meeting on a European scale with thousands of participants, there will be essentially a get-together of the European Union bloc and the United States of America and its satellites to discuss issues of interest to the countries "west of Vienna". They are well known, so we shall not repeat ourselves. At the same time, there will be no discussion of problems that are really important for the entire OSCE area, such as combating neo-Nazism, the increasing glorification of Nazism or discrimination against the Russian and Russian-speaking population. We emphasize that the holding of such an ersatz event cannot be regarded as a substitute for the OSCE's HDIM. For our country, any conclusion or recommendation made by this "gathering" will naturally be null and void.

Moreover, we once again confirm our position of principle regarding the need to move OSCE human dimension events and the headquarters of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to a location outside Poland. Obviously, the Polish authorities are proud of their prestigious title

and, to put it bluntly, of the benefit that the then still neutral Poland reaped at the time. At the same time, it has a very limited understanding of its functions and has ceased to appreciate, if it ever did, the full responsibility that this high status implies. The most obvious of these responsibilities are to ensure the safety of participants from all countries without exception, to allow those registered for events to enter the country, to understand the inadmissibility of harassment and intimidation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from countries that are not “dear to Poland’s heart”.

Let us be honest. It is difficult for us to understand how the Polish capital can be the venue for any OSCE meetings when, since September 2022, Poland has banned Russian citizens, including those holding Schengen visas issued by third countries, from entering the country for tourism, business, or cultural and sporting purposes. The Polish authorities have welcomed the suspension of the EU-Russia agreement on simplified visa procedures for Russian and EU citizens. There are no passenger railway and air services between Russia and Poland. Since 17 September 2023, passenger cars and other passenger vehicles registered in Russia have been banned from entering the country from outside the Schengen area.

As Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE in 2022, Poland openly abused its powers by endeavouring to prevent public figures from Russia from attending relevant human rights events both in Warsaw and in Vienna. The then Prime Minister, whose name is no longer remembered, proudly said that Poland was the “champion” of Russophobia. The logical outcome of this policy was the refusal, unprecedented in the OSCE, to allow Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to enter the country to participate in the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Łódź.

In October 2023, representatives of Russian NGOs travelling to the Warsaw Conference, which was co-organized by the ODIHR, encountered difficulties entering the country on account of these visa restrictions. One Russian community organizer was detained for several hours at the airport of the Polish capital under spurious pretexts, although she was then allowed to enter the country. Another civil society representative was less fortunate. An hour before departure, he was not allowed to board a Polish airline flight from Kutaisi to Warsaw on the grounds of anti-Russian visa restrictions.

In April 2023, LOT Airlines refused to allow members of a Russian delegation travelling to a meeting of the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways (OSJD), headquartered in the Polish capital, to board its flight from Istanbul to Warsaw. The country’s authorities took this decision to restrict the entry of Russian citizens into its territory. For the same reasons, Russian representatives were unable to take part in other events by the aforementioned organization. In June 2024 the country’s authorities refused to issue a visa to an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia and to allow representatives of the New Land Grain Corridor group to enter Poland, deliberately limiting the composition of the Russian delegation at the subsequent session of the OSJD Ministerial Conference held from 18 to 20 June 2024.

The Polish authorities also demonstrate a real arbitrariness when it comes to the admission of Russian athletes to international events in the country. Let us cite some specific examples.

On 24 April 2023, the Russian tennis player Vitalia Diatchenko was flying through Warsaw from Cairo on her way to a tournament in Nice, but LOT Airlines refused to allow her to board the flight, citing “company policy” of not carrying Russian citizens.

On 22 July 2023, the Polish Ministry of the Interior published a statement reporting how a border guard at Warsaw’s Okęcie airport refused entry to the Russian tennis player Vera Zvonareva, who had flown to Poland from Serbia on a French visa to participate in a Women’s Tennis Association tournament in Warsaw. Security concerns were cited as the pretext for non-admission.

Poland refused to issue visas to Russian athletes intending to take part in the World Junior Wrestling Championships in Warsaw that were to be held from 14 to 20 August 2023. The United World Wrestling international governing body ultimately decided to move the event to Jordan. A statement published on its website said the Polish authorities had failed to fulfil their obligations to ensure the equal participation of all athletes without discrimination based on passport or other criteria.

On 3 April 2023, the Russian Fencing Federation announced that it would not send its foilists to the Women's Foil World Cup in Poznań, Poland, owing to unacceptable participation conditions set by the Polish Fencing Federation. After the International Fencing Federation confirmed on 4 April 2023 that the rules for the admission of Russian and Belarusian athletes to competitions approved by it were binding, the Polish Fencing Federation announced its decision to cancel the World Cup stage in Poland.

Madam Chairperson,

These cases are only a drop in the ocean in terms of Poland's irresponsible behaviour and refusal to honour commitments it had previously undertaken voluntarily.

By denying access to the country to citizens of undesirable countries with alternative points of view, Poland is helping to hollow out the very essence of the human dimension and to distort the fundamental principles of the Helsinki Final Act. It is obvious that the short-sighted actions of the authorities in Warsaw are driven by a policy with a heavy mixture of historical chauvinism and grotesque revanchism. This confirms that the country's authorities will continue to use any excuse to get back at Russians because of their own historical complexes while neglecting their obligations. Russia will therefore continue to insist that Poland be stripped of its status as host of the relevant events and as the location of the ODIHR headquarters, which it no longer deserves. We call upon all right-thinking participating States to support the Russian position. It is important for all of us to prevent the final degradation of the OSCE's third "basket".

Thank you for your attention.