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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1438th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 September 2023

**In connection with the continued discrimination against Russian non-governmental organizations by the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office**

Mr. Chairperson,

One of the fundamental premises of the OSCE's work – in addition to the consensus principle and the need to take into account the opinions of all participating States – has traditionally been the involvement of civil society organizations in “third basket” events.

The broad-based participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society activists has always been a hallmark of the OSCE, setting our Organization apart from other universal or regional structures. There are numerous commitments that have reiterated the need to ensure the broadest possible access for such organizations and individuals. In particular, in accordance with paragraph 43.4 of the CSCE Moscow Document of 1991, the participating States agreed to “allow NGOs, in view of their important function within the human dimension of the CSCE, to convey their views to their own governments and the governments of all the other participating States during the future work of the CSCE on the human dimension”. Similarly, in accordance with paragraph 14 of the CSCE Helsinki Document of 1992, “the participating States will provide opportunities for the increased involvement of non-governmental organizations in CSCE activities.” Likewise paragraph 17 of the CSCE Budapest Document of 1994, whereby “the participating States and CSCE institutions will provide opportunities for increased involvement of NGOs in CSCE activities”.

The two-day conference on women's empowerment held in Tetovo on 5 and 6 September once again demonstrated the inability of North Macedonia to perform the functions of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office. That event will find a worthy place among the countless destructive efforts by the authorities of North Macedonia to violate the relevant decisions, the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE and established practice.

Specialist Russian civil society organizations working to protect and promote women's rights and opportunities had planned to participate in the event in question. However, they were denied registration on the basis of a rule that had been introduced unexpectedly – all NGOs needed to have an invitation from the Chairmanship-in-Office.

It should be noted that initially there was no such “small print” in the information circulated, and that the requirement to have an invitation is in general rarely applied in OSCE practice. Moreover, usually anyone wishing to do so can submit an application for registration for a particular event as long as it has been drawn up in accordance with the rules. As for the applications themselves, these must be considered by the event organizers on a non-discriminatory basis. And, naturally, the Russian civil society activists, just like all the others, took that for granted.

Thus, there is a strong sense that the organizers introduced an “invitation-only” system of participation as soon as they saw Russian citizens on the list of those who had submitted applications. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that our civil society organizations promptly requested invitations from the Chairmanship, but they were simply ignored. It would appear that visa-related and logistic methods for preventing representatives of Russia from having access to OSCE events are no longer sufficient.

The Chairmanship team of North Macedonia, following the example of its Polish predecessors and with the active support of the Western alliance countries, is continuing the policy of destroying the foundations of the OSCE’s work. One has the impression that a new epithet, namely that of a “dishonest broker”, should be introduced especially for the OSCE Chairmanship of North Macedonia. At the same time, the authorities of North Macedonia do not care at all about the negative implications for what is left of their country’s reputation at the helm of our Organization. We believe that it is high time for North Macedonia to desist from such behaviour and at least try to act in the way a State chairing a major regional organization should conduct itself.

Thank you for your attention.