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PC.DEL/1587/23  
23 November 2023

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1452nd MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 November 2023

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

Mr. Chairperson,  
Ms. Ribeiro,

In taking stock of your activities in the post of Representative on Freedom of the Media, we are unfortunately obliged to note that you did not live up to the expectations vested in you. The Office of so important and functionally unique an institution as the Media Representative is in a state of profound crisis. Ms. Ribeiro, you were not able to disregard the pressure exerted on you by some Western countries and to fulfil your duties transparently, even-handedly and without double standards, as required by the mandate.

Today's report, which misrepresents the very nature of the current information landscape in the OSCE area, is a case in point. First of all, there are still many questions about the selection of information sources when it comes to assessing the media situation in participating States. Not a single one of our concerns relayed in writing to the Office of the Media Representative lately has been taken into account, neither in the document just circulated nor in the Media Representative's work. As a result, the executive structure entrusted to Ms. Ribeiro, which is meant to work for the good of the participating States, has completely discredited itself. In our eyes at least.

Secondly, we continue to oppose the use of non-agreed language. In particular, it is still not clear to us what "citizen journalists" are. Are they bloggers, social activists, intelligence services personnel or perhaps simply people who have a telephone with a built-in video camera and a social media account? We categorically reject attempts to equate them with members of the professional journalistic community, and to present the information posted by them on the Internet as more trustworthy than that obtained from official sources. By the way, even media outlets in Ukraine, when writing about the so-called Ukrainian "journalist" Serhiy Tsyhipa mentioned in your report, refer to him as an "activist" or a "civilian hostage", but not as a media worker. Maybe you, Ms. Ribeiro, would care to share his output with us or, at the very least, name the media outlets for which he worked, so as to dispel any doubts on this score?

There are also many questions regarding the Media Representative's selectivity. This refers, among other aspects, to the so-called journalists from Russia mentioned in the report. Not all of them, of course, are actually journalists. However, they are all without exception disseminating Western narratives and

vociferously setting themselves up in opposition to the Russian State. Violations of the rights of other journalists – which, incidentally, are a thousand times greater in number – apparently do not merit Ms. Ribeiro’s attention, even when they are being humiliated, harassed or murdered. After all, freedom of speech nowadays applies only to anti-Russian speech, everything else being “propaganda”. That is the only possible explanation for the disgraceful silence of staff from the relevant OSCE structure with regard to the high-profile killings of Darya Dugina, Vladlen Tatarsky, Oleg Klovov, Rostislav Zhuravlev and other representatives of Russian media who lost their lives carrying out their professional duty. Only today, one more journalist was killed as a result of shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces, namely Boris Maksudov, a correspondent for the All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company (VGTRK).

Similarly, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media is consciously ignoring the fact that violence has become a customary way of exercising influence on media workers in “advanced democracies”. Thus, even the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, a pro-Western non-governmental organization, notes in its monitoring report that there has been a significant increase in the number of physical attacks on journalists by law enforcement agencies in the European Union. Most of these attacks took place during protests and demonstrations in France and Germany. What is more, the number of such incidents in the first half of 2023 was higher than that recorded for the whole of 2022.

More than anyone else, it is correspondents from Russia who come in for the most trouble as it becomes clear that hardly anyone from the relevant international bodies will stand up for them and that crimes against them can go unpunished. A recent glaring example is the brutal detention of Alexander Gasyuk, a reporter for the *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* newspaper, and his deportation from the Republic of Cyprus by the local security services. After this outrageous assault on a media worker we saw how Ms. Ribeiro failed not only to demand that justice be restored and those responsible be held accountable, as would have been appropriate, but even to express elementary words of sympathy for that Russian journalist.

We note the enthusiastic remarks in the report regarding the Media Representative’s participation in media-related events in the Baltic States. We would be very interested to know whether, during your interactions with representatives of the Latvian authorities, you, Ms. Ribeiro, discussed the criminal proceedings against 14 Russian-speaking journalists that were instituted merely because the defendants had written for and given interviews to Russian media outlets? Or perhaps you proposed to these authorities that, as a widely advertised service of your Office, you could provide an expert opinion on the National Security Concept approved by the Saeima (Latvian Parliament), specifically on the part dealing with the prohibition on broadcasting in the Russian language as of 1 January 2026, which applies to all of the country’s public media? Our opinion on this matter is well known. It is yet another gross act of discrimination and segregation of the media along ethnolinguistic lines that warrants public censure. For if that document were to be adopted, 40 per cent of the country’s population would be deprived of the opportunity to receive information in their native language.

Now for a few words about the working methods of the Media Representative and her Office. We have repeatedly heard “quiet diplomacy” – of which Ms. Ribeiro is so fond – being invoked in response to our concerns. However, we are certain that applying such diplomacy to, say, the situation currently playing out in the Republic of Moldova is not only not appropriate but even detrimental. The purging of any manifestations of dissent continues apace there, while repression against media outlets that have not sworn allegiance to the authorities has reached fever pitch. I would remind you that, in the run-up to local elections, the Moldovan Government, under the pretext of a “Russian threat”, blocked 22 Russian-language news sites to start with (on 24 October) and then did the same to 31 online media outlets and six television channels (on 30 October). The same fate had already befallen 12 channels and 22 websites in December last year. In addition, the head of the Sputnik Moldova news agency, Vitaly Denisov, was expelled from Chişinău on 13 September. It is telling that even in the report of 6 November on the local elections in

Moldova by the observers from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, this censoring of the media and shutting-down of media outlets is deemed to be “a disproportionate restriction of freedom of expression” and the authorities’ actions are described as being contrary to international standards and OSCE commitments. In that document it is likewise emphasized that the Moldovan authorities did not make full use of the existing toolbox, which also provides for the issuing of warnings and fines. As for the allegations regarding extremist content, which served to justify the imposition of blocks, these “are too broad to conform with international standards on the principle of legality”. Media rights violations were also noted in the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, Ambassador Kelly Keiderling. It is difficult even just to imagine the uproar that would erupt here if Russia were to block access to more than 100 media outlets in less than a year.

The need to forbid the use of Pegasus and Predator spyware for the surveillance of journalists is set forth in a very superficial and diffuse manner in the Media Representative’s report. And, as was to be expected, there is no criticism of the plans by the European Commission to allow, through the proposed new European Media Freedom Act, the use of such spyware by the governments of EU countries (naturally under that favourite pretext of “safeguarding national security”). As reported in the media, more than 60 European civil society organizations have already – unlike you, Ms. Ribeiro – called upon the Council of the European Union to abandon such plans, since they pose “serious risks to ... core democratic principles and fundamental rights, notably press freedoms, freedom of expression and the protection of journalists”. If the OSCE Media Representative had been going about her duties in a professional manner, there would most certainly have been an appropriate response from her to such moves. However, Ms. Ribeiro, we have long ceased to expect anything from you.

Thank you for your attention.