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**STATEMENT BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1397th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 November 2022

On the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists

Mr. Chairperson,

The International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists was observed on 2 November. One of its goals is to draw attention to the problem of the safety of journalists and other media professionals, many of whom are constantly faced with risks and threats to life and health owing to the very nature of their work. We categorically condemn attacks, ill-treatment, harassment and other crimes against media workers.

In connection with this date, we cannot fail to remember those who have suffered for their journalistic activities – in particular, the WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who faces up to 175 years in prison should he be extradited to the United States of America. Another striking example is the persecution by the authorities in Germany of the German journalist Alina Lipp, who has also worked in the OSCE region. This German citizen has become a persona non grata in the eyes of her own country. At first the German media began hounding her, then her bank accounts were blocked, and later, to cap it all, criminal proceedings were instituted against her. While countries from the Western alliance make solemn declarations about protecting freedom of speech, continued efforts are in fact going on behind the scenes there to “cleanse” their information space. Any point of view that differs from the Western narratives is immediately declared to be propaganda, disinformation or a threat to democracy.

Problems with the safety of journalists in the Western OSCE participating States are recorded by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, not least in its reports on elections. Let us take some examples from 2022. Instances of journalists being intimidated and threatened in Latvia and Sweden have been reported. Attention is drawn to the lack, to all intents and purposes, of a proper reaction by the judiciary to such incidents in Slovenia. In France, growing hostility has been observed on the whole towards media workers who cover protests. According to the US Press Freedom Tracker, a non-governmental organization, 35 instances of physical assault against journalists have been recorded in the United States since the start of this year alone, including assaults on journalists covering protests.

Indeed, discrimination against Russian and Russian-language media has become part of the information policy of several OSCE participating States. As at October of this year, more than a hundred Russian-language and Russian channels, news agencies and websites had been subjected to various

restrictions, ranging from the political persecution of media workers to the complete shutting down and blocking of information resources.

The Western, chiefly US, information technology giants have conclusively revealed their true nature. The most high-profile incidents involve politically motivated persecution and access restrictions by Google, which owns, *inter alia*, the video hosting site YouTube. Some 70 instances of unjustified blocking of content by YouTube have been recorded to date, including both individual video postings and the channels of Russian media outlets, public figures and journalists. Surely this is in breach of a fundamental principle of a democratic State, namely freedom of speech?

Mr. Chairperson,

The system of State commitments on protecting media workers built up over many years and the architecture of multilateral institutions tasked with facilitating the practical implementation of those commitments have failed the test of universality and impartiality. The flawed logic espoused by “civilized” democracies whereby journalists are to be divided into “good” and “bad”, into those who deserve protection and those deemed unworthy of it, has crept into the work of many nominally independent entities. This has led to their being discredited and, in some cases, to complete dysfunction. We would otherwise have heard them direct words of censure at those who impose sanctions against media outlets and encourage the use of pressure against their correspondents. Or at those who run the criminal Myrotvorets website. We have not heard a single word from the relevant OSCE executive structures about the numerous crimes against media workers. There is a simple reason for this. Those journalists’ point of view is not in line with the point of view approved by the collective West. It is also lamentable that such selectiveness in their assessments on the part of so-called civilized democracies is interpreted by the Kyiv regime as tacit approval for its infamies and prompts it to keep committing new, even more cynical and barbarous acts.

Without a doubt, our Organization must likewise pay greater attention to ensuring the safety of journalists and safeguarding media pluralism. We call upon the OSCE participating States to end violence against media workers and not to subject them to entry bans, expulsions, unauthorized detention or denial of accreditation. It is unacceptable for any State to use financial and legal leverage to push media outlets out of its information space, in particular through prohibitions on broadcasting, the closing of bank accounts or by any other means.

The Representative on Freedom of the Media must play an active role and do her bit, too, by reacting to crimes against journalists without “cherry-picking” and without double standards.

Thank you for your attention.