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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1414th MEETING OF
THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

9 March 2023

International Women's Day

Mr. Chairperson,

International Women's Day was officially observed throughout the world yesterday – a radiant and joyous holiday that coincides in such symbolic fashion with the approach of spring. It has come a long way since the start of the last century, when, incidentally, it originated in North America. Starting off as a form of grassroots mass protest, it achieved international recognition under its present name in 1975 with United Nations General Assembly resolution 32/142. In observing it, we today pay tribute to the efforts of many a generation of remarkable women belonging to a movement that is about giving women equal rights in society.

Unfortunately, the lofty goals that guided the originators of the idea of establishing a day of solidarity with women in the struggle for equal rights with men and emancipation are still far from being attained. The rights of girls and women continue to be violated in the OSCE area, including in States that set themselves up as paragons of democracy and models to be emulated in the field of human rights. As for the factors contributing to the unresolved issues on the women's agenda, they are well known, namely, growing racial and ethnic intolerance, which affects women from national minorities and migrant women; violence by the law enforcement agencies in temporary detention centres for migrants; the high demand for "living goods" for the purposes of sexual exploitation; the lowering of the age of consent; and much else besides. Moreover, these factors are quite often intertwined with a more general background of shortcomings in this area.

Let us turn to some specific country case studies that serve to clearly illustrate the wide range of violations of women's rights.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which is known for its pro-Western attitudes, notes that women are under-represented in political life in Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Italy, Latvia, Slovenia and the United States of America.

Furthermore, women are often the victims of repressive State policies and punitive justice. Consider, for example, the case involving the activist Tatyana Andriyets (Tatjana Andrijec) in Latvia. The Latvian

authorities have instituted criminal proceedings against her in connection with her public activities in support of Russian-language education and protection of that country's memorial heritage. We call upon the ODIHR and the other executive structures of our Organization to turn their attention to this egregious instance of dissent being choked off in the European Union and to give a principled assessment of it.

In a report published in May 2022 by the Fawcett Society, a reputable British non-governmental organization (NGO), it is pointed out that women from national minorities in the United Kingdom encounter racism at work. A similar problem may be observed in the United States. According to recent data from Catalyst, an NGO, more than half of the women in that country have experienced racism and discrimination.

Female migrants and refugees continue to be in a vulnerable position in the Member States of the European Union as well. Relevant international bodies and EU agencies have, among other things, repeatedly flagged persisting violence against them on the part of border or law enforcement authorities. Especially shocking are the cases of ill-treatment of refugees, including women and children, in Poland. On more than one occasion, Polish security forces have deployed water cannons and tear gas and used weapons and brute force against defenceless people. According to open-source information, at least seven refugees died in 2022 as a result of the actions of Polish border guards.

In 2022, the United Nations Committee against Torture, along with authoritative international NGOs, repeatedly expressed concerns over the widespread practice in Iceland of prolonged solitary confinement for those in pretrial detention, including women, children and even persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, this list could go on and on.

Mr. Chairperson,

Despite the situation inside their borders being far from ideal as regards the protection of women's rights, the representatives of countries from the Western alliance have continued, for the second day in a row within these walls, to relish in the topic of so-called crimes by the Russian armed forces on Ukrainian territory against women and girls. We shall not comment on the outpourings we have heard, the fruit of the fevered imagination of certain colleagues who are obsessed with presumption of guilt. As the experience of such discussions here shows, there is no point in responding to these empty, groundless accusations. Any attempt by us to request that at least some evidence be produced merely provokes our Western colleagues to launch into yet another torrent of even more monstrous insinuations against Russia. What matters is something else: this deluge of absurd lies will not succeed in covering up the fact of the real crimes that have been committed, that is, the massive supplies to the Kyiv regime of weapons to kill civilians, most of whom are women and children.

For our Western colleagues in this room it would be much more useful if they were to turn their attention to, say, the problem of vast numbers of Ukrainian women being ensnared in illicit activities by those dealing in "living goods". We would point out that over the past twelve months – during which even our Organization's officials have not been able to turn a blind eye to these phenomena and have presented some appalling statistics – no comments have been forthcoming whether from the Ukrainian representatives or the external handlers of the Ukrainian Government. We hereby call upon them to comment.

Mr. Chairperson,

One of the most pressing issues that calls for attention is the need to combat violence against women. We are of the view that, at the national level, a comprehensive approach is required to eliminate violence against women. Conditions must be created for their empowerment.

We emphasize that a key prerequisite for the independence of women is the development of their economic potential, of their personal growth and their professional skills. Furthermore, the promotion of women should be based on their competencies, knowledge and experience, rather than on the artificial imposition of quotas. It is also important to ensure that women participate fully in all spheres of life – public, political, economic, social and cultural.

In closing, we should like to congratulate you, Madam Secretary General, our special guests and all our female colleagues on this holiday. The struggle for the rights and equality of women goes on, with International Women's Day continuing to be an important symbol of that struggle. We wish you the best of health, joy, prosperity, creative inspiration and further professional success.

Thank you for your attention.