

PERMANENT COUNCIL MEETING № 1442

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE MOSCOW MECHANISM REPORT ON THE THREAT TO THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE HUMAN DIMENSION POSED BY HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND ABUSES IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Mr Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the following participating States Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States, inter alia those that on 28 July 2022 invoked the Moscow (Human Dimension) Mechanism on the Threats to the Fulfilment of the Provisions of the Human Dimension Posed by Human Rights Violations and Abuses in the Russian Federation.

One year ago, the report released on 22 September under the Moscow Mechanism revealed a clear link between internal repression of human rights and fundamental freedoms and external aggression: “To start a war with another country, the elite must be sure that there will be no two-front war (with one front inside and one front outside the country).

Therefore, restrictive measures are considered necessary in order not to be disturbed during the preparation for war or after it has started”. Today, Professor Nußberger’s report sadly remains topical, as Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine continues unabated, and as the human rights situation in Russia has deteriorated further. Russia has continued its systemic curtailment of human rights and civic space through further dissolution of independent media, harassment of lawyers, arbitrary imprisonment of civic activists and human rights defenders, and closure of human rights organisations, including Memorial, Moscow Helsinki Group and the Sakharov Center. The wave of repressions against dissenting voices has continued, with an array of unjust and arbitrary sentences issued under the penal code imposed on persons who only exercised their human rights and fundamental freedoms: including those who exercised freedom of expression by sharing posts on social media or exercised their right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. While in the past repression hit certain groups disproportionately, such as ethnic and religious minorities (e.g. Chechens, Jehovah witnesses), certain professions (journalists, opposition politicians) or persons belonging to particularly vulnerable groups (LGBTIQ community), it is now a generalised phenomenon.

While larger organized protests have become impossible in Russia, there are still individuals across the country, who – in the face of omnipresent repression and the arbitrary application of Russia’s laws – continue to exercise their right to freedom of expression. Their attempts to oppose the Kremlin’s despotic regime are severely punished. Let me cite a few examples: Vladimir Kara-Murza (sentenced to 25 years), Alexey Navalny (whose term was extended to 19 years in August 2023), Ilya Yashin (sentenced to 8,5 years), Alexey Gorinov (sentenced to 7 years), Maria Ponomarenko

(sentenced to 6 years), Olga Smirnova (sentenced to 6 years). There are many others, such as Igor Paskar (sentenced to 8,5 years), Igor Baryshnikov (sentenced to 7,5 years), Oleg Belousov (sentenced to 5,5 years), Pavel Pekpaev (sentenced to 5,5 years), Parvinahan Abuzarova (sentenced to 3 years), and a number of others awaiting their trials in jail or currently on trial, such as Oleg Orlov, Evgeny Bestuzhev, Alexandra Skochilenko, Evgenia Berkovich, Svetlana Petriyuchuk, Konstantin Kochanov, Anna Bazhutova, Azat Miftakhov, and Pavel Stepanov. These are just a handful of the individual activists and bloggers that reports describe as targeted for repression simply for expressing opinions contrary to government propaganda and disinformation. An Orwellian dystopia is being realized before our eyes in Russia.

In August of this year, Memorial, a prominent human rights organisation, and a 2022 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, published a 200-page report on political repression in Russia in 2022. The report gives a grim overview of continuing repressions, thus illustrating and confirming the trends detailed in Prof. Nußberger's report, including the conclusion that numerous Russian laws are clearly incompatible with the rule of law and provide the pretext for targeting opposition voices, resulting in ever intensifying repressions. Under what amounts to military censorship, anti-war protests are completely banned and the extensive application of the entire array of anti-extremism legislation since the start of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has resulted in the use of ever harsher punishments, as the examples listed above show.

We renew our appeal to Russia to uphold its international commitments and obligations on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including OSCE

principles and commitments. We call on Russia to release all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally.

We call on the OSCE to continue giving priority attention to the most critical issues in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia that continue to seriously undermine democratic stability, peace and security throughout the OSCE region and could have even greater unpredictable consequences at national and international levels.

We will continue to remind Russia of one of the cornerstones of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for which is an essential factor for peace, justice and well-being. We will continue to support those civil society actors whose work accords with the values upon which the OSCE was founded.

Thank you.