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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1432nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 July 2023

On the 28th anniversary of the tragic events in Srebrenica

Mr. Chairperson,

We pay tribute to the memory of the victims of the tragedy that took place in Srebrenica and the surrounding area in 1995. We empathize with and extend our condolences to the families and friends of all those who lost their lives as a result of the terrible crimes committed during the 1992–1995 armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, we remember the many civilian casualties of the horrendous NATO bombing during the Balkan crisis. The consequences of that aggression are still being felt today – people continue to suffer and die from diseases caused by the use of depleted uranium shells by the aircraft of this “purely defensive bloc”.

Today, there is even such a concept as “Balkan syndrome”. It emerged as a result of the large number of confirmed cases of illness among Italian soldiers who served in peacekeeping missions in the region and who died of cancer. Incidentally, legal proceedings are in full swing in Italy, where there are reportedly some 8,000 military personnel with cancer who were in the contaminated territory in the Republika Srpska and Kosovo. More than 500 lawsuits have already been filed and 400 of them have already received final judgments requiring the Italian defence establishment to pay compensation. Dozens of lawsuits have also been filed against NATO in Serbia.

We reaffirm the Russian Federation’s position regarding the events in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which claimed the lives of thousands of people of various nationalities and faiths. We have consistently advocated the investigation of all crimes against all ethnic groups. The perpetrators must be given the punishment they deserve. We believe that it is inadmissible and provocative to seek to attribute full responsibility for unlawful acts to one group. We regard this as a clear attempt to politicize the issue at a time when the situation in the region continues to deteriorate.

There is no public consensus on the Srebrenica tragedy even in Bosnia and Herzegovina itself. Label-slinging clearly does not help to ease inter-ethnic tensions but merely serves to diminish the prospects for achieving sustainable peace. In this context, we do not consider it appropriate or justified for the Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina to participate in commemorative events, which are then published on social media under the banner of “genocide in Srebrenica”. We recall that the main task of this

field operation, in accordance with its mandate, is to strengthen stability, promote reconciliation and support the development of a multinational and multi-ethnic society in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is for this reason, incidentally, that, in 2015, the United Nations Security Council did not adopt a draft resolution attributing full responsibility for the tragic events in Bosnia and Herzegovina to only one of the parties. The international community's efforts should be aimed at strengthening the foundations of peace and security in the Balkans and not at undermining them.

As a guarantor of the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement, the Russian Federation will continue to assist in its implementation, promote genuine inter-ethnic and interfaith harmony and help to foster a climate of trust and co-operation in the Balkans.

Thank you for your attention.