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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN, PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1060th
MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 June 2015

**Regarding the fifth Congress of Leaders of World and
Traditional Religions**

Mr. Chairperson,

The initiative by the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, kicked off in 2003 with the first of these congresses. The record of the fifth Congress in June 2015 shows that direct dialogue between the leaders of world and traditional religions based on trust and mutual understanding makes an important contribution to strengthening peace and stability, which is particularly important for multi-ethnic and multi-confessional States.

Russia, which has around 190 peoples and ethnic groups and over 60 confessions and religions, has unique experience in safeguarding the peace, stability and security of society and mutual respect and understanding for the different cultures, civilizations and religions. There are various mechanisms in our country to promote interreligious dialogue. The most authoritative are the Presidential Council for Co-ordination with Religious Organizations and the Interreligious Council of Russia, a non-governmental organization created by representatives of confessions and religions in Russia.

We regard the fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions held in Astana on 10 and 11 June 2015 as a very important event for fostering interreligious dialogue and accord. The fact that for the first time high-ranking politicians met to discuss peace and understanding with religious leaders confirms the importance of this forum as an international platform for discussion of current issues concerning co-operation between different religions and the universal nature of basic moral values in any religion.

We believe that the discussion and resolution at the fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions will also be of interest in the context of the second OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Fostering Mutual Respect and Understanding to be held at the beginning of July. An exchange of opinions between experts about the results of the Congress would also be extremely useful in drafting declarations for the Ministerial Council meeting in Belgrade on combating discrimination and intolerance in relation to Christians and Muslims.

Thank you for your attention.