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Delegation of Belarus

**STATEMENT BY  
THE PERMANENT DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS  
TO THE OSCE AT THE 999th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 May 2014

**On Victory Day**

Mr. Chairperson,

An important holiday takes place in a number of OSCE participating States on 8/9 May, namely the 69th anniversary of the victory over fascism. For the Republic of Belarus and the people of other countries of the former Soviet Union it marks the solemn Day of Victory in the Great Patriotic War from 1941 to 1945. It will remain forever in human memory as the unforgettable date on which Europe and the world were delivered from fascism.

Victory Day has rightly gone down in history as a symbol of valour and heroism, unprecedented acts of bravery and the most arduous trials endured by tens of millions of people who paid with their lives to defend freedom and deliver mankind from Nazism.

The people of Belarus played their part in the defeat of fascism.

We paid a heavy price for victory over Nazism. The war, which swept like a deadly hurricane through the country, carried off almost one in three Belarusians. Our hearts will forever carry the memory of the hundreds of thousands of victims of the ghettos and death camps and the inhabitants of Khatyn and 628 other Belarusian villages, who were burnt alive by the Nazis and their allies.

The tragedy of Khatyn has become a symbol of the mass annihilation of civilians carried out by the Nazis and their collaborators in the occupied territory.

On 22 March 1943, the fascists and their accomplices attacked the village of Khatyn and surrounded it. The entire population of Khatyn, young and old, the elderly, women and children, were driven from their homes and herded into the village barn. The old and sick were roused from their beds at gunpoint, and not even women with small children or babies at their breast were spared.

When the entire population of the village had been assembled in the barn, the fascists locked the doors, surrounded it with straw soaked in petrol and set fire to it. The village barn went up in flames immediately. Children suffocated and cried out in the smoke. Adults tried to save the young ones. The doors were unable to withstand the pressure of dozens of bodies and burst open. With their clothes ablaze and gripped by fear, people rushed to escape, but those who burst forth from the flames were fired on dispassionately by the fascists with their rifles and machine guns. There were 149 fatalities in all, including 75 children aged under 16 years. The village was ransacked and burned to the ground.

Mr. Chairperson,

We highly appreciate the contribution to the overall victory made by the anti-Hitler coalition and other countries opposing fascism. We recall the courage of the millions of people of different confessions and nationalities who sacrificed their lives in this struggle, the concentration camp victims and those who died in blockades or as a result of privations.

It is our shared responsibility to keep alive the memory of all the victims of fascism, to maintain their graves and the memorials to them and to ensure they are not desecrated. We should make every effort together to prevent any attempts to trivialize the crimes of the Nazis and their accomplices convicted at the Nuremberg Trials.

We cannot but be dismayed and concerned at the fact that aggressive nationalism, neo-fascism and the neo-Nazi ideology are once again raising their head today before our very eyes in the OSCE region. There are cases of the glorification of Nazism, propaganda and incitement to racism, xenophobia and intolerance.

The terrible tragedy in Odessa was a serious warning to the international community and calls for a decisive response from all of us.

We urge all participating States to take concrete steps to oppose these phenomena guided by the OSCE's commitments and the provisions of the resolution adopted in December 2012 by the United Nations General Assembly on the glorification of Nazism and to act in strict compliance with international principles set forth in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

This latest anniversary of the victory over fascism reminds us of the need for concerted efforts by the international community, including the OSCE participating States, to ensure that the twentieth century disaster that we know as the Second World War is not repeated.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.