UK Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Delegation leader – the Rt Hon John Whittingdale OBE MP
Inter-Parliamentary Relations Office (Parliamentary Assemblies),
House of Commons, SW1A 0AA
020 7219 6595   oscepa.del@parliament.uk

Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

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Dear Colleagues,

On 13 June, the Head of the Russian Delegation to the OSCE PA, Mr Petr Tolstoy wrote to all members of the OSCE PA regarding the British Government's refusal of visa applications from members of the Russian Delegation to the OSCE PA to participate in the forthcoming Annual Assembly in Birmingham. Applications from the Belarus delegation will also be refused.

All members of the Delegation of the Russian Federation are on the UK sanctions list due to the support they have given to the Russian Federation's illegal invasion of Ukraine. This also applies to members of the Belarus delegation who have consistently supported the Russian position. The UK remains open to meaningful dialogue and the OSCE PA is an important forum for conflict management, mediation and dialogue. However, as long as President Putin's regime continues its aggression and occupation of areas of the sovereign territory of Ukraine, we will continue to hold it to account for its actions. We aspire to a constructive relationship with the Russian Federation, but that is impossible while this situation continues. This applies equally to Belarus.

The Russian Federation has additionally taken the decision to sanction UK MPs, including myself, the Speaker of the House of Commons and six other members of the UK delegation, in response to the UK's support for Ukraine.

We do not therefore believe that it is appropriate for visas to be issued to the Russian delegation to attend the OSCE PA at this time and I fully support the UK Government decision. I am happy to answer further questions from any colleagues on this matter.

With best wishes,

The Right Honourable John Whittingdale OBE MP
Leader of the UK Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly