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Disproportionate Russian restrictions on freedom of religion and belief

Reply to Written question[1]: Written question No. 716 (Doc. 14193)
Committee of Ministers

The Committee of Ministers recalls that the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights, which all Council of Europe member States have undertaken to respect.

The Committee of Ministers has in the past made declarations calling for full compliance with these principles, including in the fight against terrorism. These declarations remain fully valid.

As regards the facts relating to Mr Donald Ossewaarde, during the Committee of Ministers' examination of the question raised by the Honourable Parliamentarian, the Russian Federation submitted that these were not linked to counterterrorism legislation, but to the amendments to the 1997 federal law on freedom of conscience and religious associations. It was for failure to comply with this law that Mr Ossewaarde was charged with an administrative fine by a court decision that was upheld on appeal with due respect for the principles of fairness and proportionality.

The Russian delegation further emphasised that Mr Ossewaarde, who is still residing in the Russian Federation, enjoys freedom of religion and belief pursuant to the Russian Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights.

1. Adopted at the 1278th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (22 February 2017).