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Russian Federation's ban on Jehovah's Witnesses

Reply to Written question[1]: Written question No. 723 (Doc. 14384)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has discussed the events relating to the liquidation of the Administrative Centre and 395 Local Religious Organisations of Jehovah's Witnesses following the judgment of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation of 17 July 2017, and the Russian delegation has provided information in this respect. The Committee is following these developments closely, in the light of the settled case law of the European Court of Human Rights under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, that freedom of religion, including freedom to manifest one's religion, alone or in community with others, is one of the foundations of a pluralistic democratic society and one of the most vital elements that go to make up the identity of believers and their conception of life.

2. At its human rights (DH) meeting from 5 to 7 December 2017, the Committee examined two cases against the Russian Federation concerning violations of the rights of Jehovah's Witnesses under Articles 9 and 11 of the Convention (freedom of religion and freedom of association), namely *Jehovah's Witnesses of Moscow and Others* (Application No. 302/02) and *Krupko and Others* (Application No. 26587/07). It decided to transfer both cases to the enhanced supervision track and, *inter alia,* invited the authorities to provide information, without prejudice to the European Court's examination of any complaints lodged as a result of the new ban, in particular as regards the possibilities for the applicants to continue to enjoy the individual right to freedom of religion.

1. Adopted at the 1303rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (10 January 2018).