

Council of Europe
The Secretary General

Strasbourg, 28 February 2021

Dear Minister,

It is a great pleasure to congratulate the Russian Federation on 25 years as a Council of Europe member state.

During that time, Russia has ratified nearly 70 Conventions and Protocols. These include the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter, which are the foundation of human rights in Europe today. Others cover pressing issues such as the prevention of torture and inhuman treatment, the protection of national minorities, the suppression of terrorism, and the prevention of sexual abuse of children. Because the Russian Federation has joined these, the rights of Russian citizens are better protected than ever before.

Like all other European citizens, they also have the ultimate right of appeal to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Its interpretation of the European Convention and the case law that results from this play a vital role in raising human rights standards across our continent. Its judgments must be implemented and executed by national authorities, fully and swiftly. Positive changes brought about by the execution of judgments in Russia include improved prison conditions, an end to the automatic deportation of HIV-positive foreign citizens, the protection *bona fide* buyers' property rights, and new legal safeguards for military servicemen. These are important developments and the Russian authorities were right to ensure them.

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But member states are not only responsible for complying with European standards: they are also tasked with setting them. Within our pan-European family, the Russian Federation has a vital role to play as one of 47 countries working together to address the ongoing, evolving, and new challenges that confront human rights, democracy, and the rule of law within our common legal area. In our Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, Russia's authorities and parliamentarians have the opportunity to do this and help Europe steer a positive course in the interests of more than 830 million people.

The Council of Europe was founded in 1949. Since then, it has sought to ensure peace on the basis of greater unity. The addition of the Russian Federation 25 years ago was a welcome development in that quest. In these uncertain times, it is in all our interests to make further progress still and I have no doubt about our potential to do that, together, in the years to come.

Congratulations on this important anniversary.

Yours sincerely,



Marija Pejčinović Burić