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Russian Federation

RUS/01 - Galina Starovoitova

***Decision adopted by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians
at its 146th session (Geneva, 24-27 January 2015)***

The Committee,

Referring to the case of Ms. Galina Starovoitova, a member of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, who was assassinated on 20 November 1998, and to the resolution adopted by the Governing Council at its 192nd session (27 March 2013),

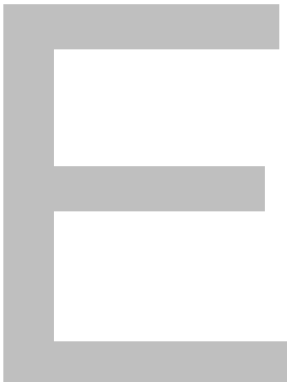
Recalling the following information on file provided over several years:

- In June 2005, two men, Mr. Akishin and Mr. Kolchin, were found guilty of Ms. Starovoitova's murder and sentenced to 20 years in prison by the St. Petersburg City Court, which, in its judgment, concluded that the murder had been politically motivated; in September 2007, two others were found guilty of complicity in the murder and sentenced to 11 and 2 years in prison respectively; four other suspects were acquitted and released; there are open national and international arrest warrants for three other individuals; in its report of April 2008, the Prosecutor General's Office stated that the investigation and search operations to identify the mastermind(s) of Ms. Starovoitova's murder were ongoing,

Recalling that Ms. Starovoitova was a prominent Russian human rights advocate and had denounced instances of high-profile corruption shortly before her assassination; *recalling* also that, in November 2009, the United Nations Human Rights Committee expressed "its concern at the alarming incidence of threats, violent assaults and murders of journalists and human rights defenders in the Russian Federation, which has created a climate of fear and a chilling effect on the media ...", and urged the Russian Federation "to take immediate action to provide effective protection and ensure the prompt, effective, thorough, independent, and impartial investigation of threats, violent assaults and murders and, where appropriate, prosecute and initiate proceedings against the perpetrators of such acts"; *recalling further* that many States made similar recommendations during the first and second Universal Periodic Reviews of the Russian Federation's compliance with its human rights obligations before the United Nations Human Rights Council (February 2009, April 2013),

Recalling the information that Mr. Sergey A. Gavrillov, a member of the Russian delegation, provided to the Committee at the hearing held during the 126th IPU Assembly (Kampala, March-April 2012):

- It was very difficult to identify the mastermind(s) behind Ms. Starovoitova's murder, which had to be seen in the context of her political activism; after it became possible, in 2006, for convicts to obtain reduced sentences in exchange for cooperation in providing essential information about unresolved crimes, Mr. Kolchin had cooperated to help advance the recently resumed investigation into Ms. Starovoitova's murder; as a result, the authorities had



been able to identify Mr. Mikhael Glushchenko, a former member of parliament and a businessman involved in large-scale criminal activities, as the presumed mastermind; Mr. Glushchenko was now a formal suspect in the investigation into Ms. Starovoitova's murder and had been found guilty of extortion and sentenced to a long term in prison, which he was currently serving;

- The State Duma was fully committed to shedding light on and establishing accountability for Ms. Starovoitova's murder and had set up an anti-corruption and security committee that was monitoring the case and coordinating with the Prosecutor General's Office about further developments; it should be possible to communicate further information on the investigation and proceedings to the IPU in the coming months,

Considering that the State Duma has not provided information on the case since the above-noted hearing, despite repeated requests,

Considering that, according to the complainants, Mr. Glushchenko has been charged not as the mastermind of the crime but as one of the organizers acting under instructions; he has allegedly entered a plea bargain by agreeing to provide names of the mastermind(s) in exchange for a reduced sentence; it is expected that the Public Prosecutor's Office will shortly proceed with an indictment and a trial against Mr. Glushchenko; the investigators remain committed to pursuing the case and the investigation has apparently gained momentum on the basis of the information provided by Mr. Glushchenko; there is hope that it may lead to investigations and charges against new suspects in the future,

1. *Notes with satisfaction* that the pursuit of justice in this case continues to make progress towards identifying the mastermind(s) behind Ms. Starovoitova's murder, and *expresses the hope* that Mr. Glushchenko's indictment and trial will allow the investigators to make further progress towards ensuring full accountability for those responsible for ordering Ms. Starovoitova's murder;
2. *Regrets* that it has not received any response from the State Duma since March 2012; *encourages* it to provide updated information and observations, including confirmation of the latest developments in the investigation; *reaffirms* its conviction that the State Duma's continued interest in the case of a former colleague killed for having exercised her right to freedom of speech is critical to helping ensure that justice is done;
3. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the attention of the relevant authorities, the complainant, and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;
4. *Decides* to continue examining this case.