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## Seventy-sixth session

Agenda item 167

### Report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country

#### **Letter dated 12 September 2022 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to reaffirm that the United States takes seriously its commitments as host country of the United Nations and is honoured to serve United Nations Member States in this role. As such, and on behalf of the United States Government, I am responding to the 5 August letter to the Secretary-General from the Russian Federation ([A/76/916](#)).

The United States processes hundreds of visa applications per year for Russian representatives to the United Nations. As I detailed in my February letter ([A/76/706](#)), the United States issues more visas to the Russian Federation for multilateral work than to any other member of the Security Council. For example, for the 2021 high-level week of the General Assembly and subsequent committee meetings, the Russian Federation requested and received well over 100 temporary duty visas – nearly 50 per cent more visas than 1 Security Council member and at least five times more visas than the other 12 Council members. More broadly, in 2021, the United States issued nearly 250 visas for permanent mission staff and 150 temporary duty visas to the Russian Federation for multilateral work. The Russian Federation has always been and continues to be well represented at the United Nations.

Further, the United States Embassy in Moscow continues to process high volumes of Russian diplomatic visa applications despite being extremely short-staffed. Since 2017, the Russian Federation has forced the United States Embassy to decrease its staff by 90 per cent.

Our few consular officers handle all diplomatic visa applications, as well as provide other critical consular services, such as visiting detained or hospitalized United States citizens. Our severe staffing shortages are a direct result of the Russian Federation's decision to limit our staffing numbers and terminate the employment of our local and third-country embassy employees, some of whom performed essential duties related to visa processing. As a result, it takes significantly more time for our few consular officers to process the same quantity of diplomatic visa applications.

Despite these extraordinarily difficult circumstances, we are making best faith efforts to improve visa processing times. As my staff have reminded officials at the Russian Mission, diplomatic visa applicants are able to apply at any United States



embassy or consulate around the world that processes diplomatic visas. We have further suggested several specific locations, including several with direct flights from Moscow. Additionally, our Host Country Office continues to request delegation lists for upcoming events from Russian Mission officials to facilitate the process, reminds Russian officials of the need for Russian delegates to submit fully completed visa applications early, and assists in all possible cases that Russian Mission officials raise with it. I point to the recent Review Conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as an example of success: the Russian Mission supplied our Host Country Section a delegation list in advance, its delegates applied in sufficient time, and the Russian Federation delegates received their visas in time for the Conference.

Let me be clear in addressing the specific cases of visa denials that Foreign Minister Lavrov raised in his letter. The Russian Federation repeatedly and consistently names delegates to United Nations events and meetings and assigns government employees to work at its Permanent Mission to conduct non-United Nations business.

For example, earlier this year, pursuant to section 13 of the United Nations Headquarters Agreement, the United States required the departure of 12 intelligence operatives from the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations. These individuals abused their privileges of residence in the United States by engaging in espionage activities adverse to United States national security. The United States does not and will not allow the Russian Federation – or any Member State – to use diplomatic visas as a cover for espionage or other unauthorized business at the United Nations. These actions are an affront to the United Nations and undermine its critical work.

We call on the Russian Federation to use diplomatic visas appropriately. We also continue to ask the Russian Federation to provide our Host Country Section with full and complete delegation lists. Given the increased time needed to process visa applications, as a result both of the Russian Federation's actions and backlogs around the world following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), applicants should apply as early as possible in advance of their intended travel date.

I would also note that, as the United States has repeatedly stated, the closure of Russia's recreational property in Upper Brookville, New York, is a bilateral matter that does not pertain to our role as host country.

In addition to visas, we continue to address and make progress on all other legitimate host country matters. I encourage all Member States to bring host country concerns to the attention of my Host Country Section. If we cannot find a resolution through direct communication channels, then we welcome further discussion in the Host Country Committee. However, calls to invoke section 21 of the Headquarters Agreement are unnecessary and counterproductive.

The United States is proud of our historic role as host country of the United Nations, and the Biden Administration's commitment to multilateral diplomacy is unfaltering.

I request that you circulate the present letter as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 167.

*(Signed)* Linda **Thomas-Greenfield**

Ambassador

Representative of the United States to the United Nations