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Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Note verbale dated 26 September 2014 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Estonia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, addressed to the President of the Human Rights Council

Recalling the general debate of the Human Rights Council under agenda items 2 and 3 and referring to my statement made on 15 September, I would once more like to raise the issue of the violation of international law by the Russian Federation in an incident that took place on 5 September 2014 on the border of the Republic of Estonia and the Russian Federation, and to provide some additional information.

On 5 September 2014 at 9 a.m., an Estonian police officer, Eston Kohver, was abducted by the Russian Security Services (FSB) on Estonian territory near the border of the Republic of Estonia and the Russian Federation. Mr. Kohver was carrying out official duties to prevent cross-border crime (illicit trafficking). He was taken to the Russian Federation by force and is currently being detained in Moscow. It should be stressed that the Russian Security Services knew Mr. Kohver and were aware of his duties as a police officer. In 2011, Mr. Kohver had met in an official capacity with Russian Security Services representatives to exchange information on the illicit trafficking of weapons across the border.

On 9 September 2014, four days after the abduction and following repeated requests from the Estonian side, the Estonian Consul in Moscow was granted access to Mr. Kohver. On 12 September, the Estonian Consul met Mr. Kohver for the second time, but further requests for meetings have so far been denied. The Consul was informed that the next meeting could take place only in October.

The Estonian Government hired two defence lawyers to represent Mr. Kohver. On 17 September, the lawyers were informed that Mr. Kohver did not want to use their services.

Given the circumstances, it seems obvious that Mr. Kohver is not free in the choices that he is making.

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Mr. Kohver's abduction is a clear violation of international law by the Russian Federation. The Russian Security Services crossed illegally/trespassed into Estonian territory and abducted an Estonian citizen.

The Government of Estonia has made repeated calls for Mr. Kohver's immediate release and his safe return to Estonia. In addition, the Government has taken a number of diplomatic and consular steps, particularly in bilateral contacts with the Russian Federation, but so far this has not led to positive results.

The illegal crossing into Estonian territory, the abduction and the arbitrary detention of an Estonian citizen by the Russian Security Services cannot be justified. These actions constitute a clear and grave violation of international law by the Russian Federation, violating among other principles the principle of sovereignty, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and the norms and principles of international law that affirm the individual's right to liberty and security, inter alia the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

I would be grateful if you could circulate the present letter as a document of the twenty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council under agenda items 2 and 3.

(Signed) Jüri Seienthal

Ambassador, Permanent Representative
