

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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AT THE 1100th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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On the anniversary of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars

Mr. Chairperson,

The distinguished representative of Ukraine has raised a very important question. The Crimean Tatar people did indeed suffer greatly during the period of Stalinist repression and were deported from their homeland.

Only Crimea's reunification with Russia made it possible to rehabilitate the Crimean Tatar people and to restore their legal rights and interests, which had previously been ignored or grossly violated by the Ukrainian authorities.

On 21 April 2014, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, signed Decree No. 268 on measures to rehabilitate Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Crimean Tatar and German populations and State support for their revival and development. A range of measures were devised to restore historical justice and ensure the political, social and spiritual revival of the peoples subjected to unlawful political repression on ethnic or other grounds, including administrative expulsions. In addition, Law No. 1107-1 of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic of 26 April 1991 on the rehabilitation of repressed peoples and Law No. 1761-1 of the Russian Federation of 18 October 1991 on the rehabilitation of victims of political repression were extended to the Crimean Tatars in full measure. As a result, over 20,000 applications for rehabilitation certificates were submitted.

Decree No. 268 became the framework for systematic measures connected with the comprehensive rehabilitation of the Crimean Tatar people, both politically and economically, on the basis of the Federal Targeted Programme for the Development of Crimea to 2020, which was adopted on 11 August 2014. The Decree sets out measures for the social and economic development of some territories which in recent years or even decades had been practically abandoned and not legally regulated.

Large communities of formerly repressed peoples have now been built in Crimea. Cultural events are organized for returnees. Literature is published in their native languages and the media, including the Crimean Tatar *Yani Dunya*, *Qirim* and *Yildiz*, receive support.

The participation of Crimean Tatars in the representative bodies of the Republic of Crimea is ensured. The vast majority of Crimean Tatars – more than 90 per cent – applied for and received a Russian Federation passport. Elderly Tatars receive their pensions on time, which was not the case when Crimea was part of Ukraine.

Work is under way to establish fully fledged national and cultural autonomy for the Crimean Tatar people. The Crimean Tatar language has been recognized as a State language of the Republic of Crimea alongside Russian and Ukrainian. The Crimean Federal District authorities make arrangements each year for Crimean Muslims to perform the hajj. Many other steps are being taken to protect the rights and interests of the Crimean Tatar people.

In view of this, the claims we have heard about the allegedly deteriorating situation of the Crimean Tatars are completely unfounded. Observations made in the recent report by the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Gérard Stoudmann, on the results of his visit to Crimea also refute these claims. Groundless and alarmist statements merely serve the political ambitions of those who cannot come to terms with the legal return of Crimea to Russia, of which it will forever remain an integral part.

Mr. Chairperson,

Against the backdrop of attempts by the representatives of certain countries to spread disinformation, to put it mildly, about the situation of the Crimean Tatars in Russian Crimea, it should not be forgotten how neglected a situation we had to deal with in that sphere after more than two decades of the violation of rights and discrimination against the Crimean Tatars when the peninsula was part of Ukraine.

I would remind you of the conclusions drawn by a number of international mechanisms that assessed the situation back then. For example, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination repeatedly pointed to the absence in Ukrainian legislation of measures prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race or ethnic or national origin. It noted the Crimean Tatars' lack of access to land and employment and the unresolved question of restitution and compensation for the loss of housing and agricultural land, insufficient opportunities to study their native language, insults and acts of intolerance towards them and a lack of political representation and access to justice.

In 2013, the UN Human Rights Committee noted manifestations of intolerance and hatred towards Crimean Tatars, along with threats and acts of physical violence. Most of these crimes were committed by groups of radical Ukrainian nationalists.

In 2014, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed its concern at the fact that Crimean Tatars were subjected to discrimination and encountered difficulties in exercising their rights.

In her report dated 16 August 2013, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities wrote about the absence of a law on restoring the rights of formerly deported persons and a proper mechanism for the legal regulation of their return, and pointed to the poor housing conditions of Crimean Tatars. She noted that this policy contributed to inter-ethnic tensions on the peninsula. The Ukrainian Government refused to recognize the

local self-governing bodies of the Crimean Tatars and did not provide them with an opportunity to participate in the formation of elected bodies.

The Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities noted with concern that the number of inter-ethnic and interreligious incidents, including the desecration of religious and cultural sites, had increased across Ukraine and in Crimea particularly.

In 2012, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, underscored the importance of taking additional steps to ensure the full integration of the Crimean Tatars. In a 2013 resolution, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers identified the development of a legislative framework pertaining to the restoration and protection of the rights of national minorities as issues for immediate action.

The Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has repeatedly highlighted human rights violations in Crimea. In 2011, the Commission reported that neo-Nazi groups had expanded their presence in major industrial towns. Some political parties and their representatives allowed xenophobic remarks to be made about Crimean Tatars.

In 2014, the Committee of Experts on the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages noted that it was impossible to use the Crimean Tatar language in criminal, civil or administrative proceedings. Furthermore, according to the Committee, the language of the Crimean Tatars was not used by the local or regional executive and legislative authorities. The authorities did not provide support for that language in the economic and social sphere. Ukrainian laws were not translated into the Crimean Tatar language. The names given to places, settlements and streets were not consistent with traditional Crimean Tatar names. The experts also pointed to a lack of State support for Crimean Tatar media.

These conclusions speak for themselves.

Thank you for your attention.