

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1197th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 October 2018

**In response to the address by the President of the OSCE Parliamentary
Assembly, Mr. George Tsereteli**

Mr. Tsereteli,

We have carefully listened to your address, which gives rise to a number of clear objections on our part.

First of all, we do not agree with your concept of the world order as being “based on the rules we have created”, which the OSCE participating States should follow. In our understanding, it should be based exclusively on international law and on fundamental documents such as the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter for European Security and other normative instruments.

The argument that the OSCE can be made more effective by abolishing the consensus rule is inadmissible in our view. I should like to remind you that in the Charter for European Security, adopted at the Istanbul Summit in 1999, the Heads of State unanimously declared that they “will continue to uphold consensus as the basis for OSCE decision-making.” Its existence is extremely important at a time when some countries or groups of countries are endeavouring to impose unilateral approaches. Furthermore, observing consensus enables us to take into account the interests of all participating States and implement one of the fundamental principles of the Helsinki Decalogue, namely the principle of the sovereign equality of countries and respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty.

Your interpretation of historical events also raises questions. You recalled the tenth anniversary of the “armed conflict in Georgia” in the context of frozen conflicts in the OSCE area. However, you forgot to say who started the full-scale military operation against South Ossetia on 8 August 2008 and also who attacked the Russian peacekeepers that were part of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces. We urge you to take an impartial view of the events in the South Caucasus, as in other regions. Without an objective approach, it will be difficult for the Assembly to make a real contribution to conflict settlement in the OSCE area.

You also said that during your time in Ukraine and visit to the line of contact you witnessed the suffering of the civilian population. However, year after year, the Assembly's leadership for some reason does not notice the countless deaths, the destruction of houses and the shelling by the Ukrainian security forces of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. It is high time for a visit by the Assembly's representatives to the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic to listen to the people from the other side of the line of contact. And where is the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's response to the Ukrainian Government's sabotage of the implementation of the Minsk agreements, to the adoption of the discriminatory Law on Education, to the promotion of the no less objectionable Law on the State Language and to the extremist actions of Ukrainian radical nationalists?

However, we are in agreement with you that only through dialogue can the participating States overcome uncertainty and instability. The Assembly should serve as a platform for mutually respectful interparliamentary dialogue on the basis of equal rights in order to combat new threats and challenges, restore trust and develop co-operation.

But to do this, we need to put an end to the destructive policy of deliberately speculating about issues known to be confrontational and making unfounded accusations. Such a damaging practice leads to the deepening of dividing lines and the growing mistrust that you are concerned about. Instead of this, we need to focus on topics that bring us together.

First and foremost, this applies to combating terrorism. It is no coincidence that the resolution on this topic prepared by the Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism on the initiative of State Duma deputy Nikolay Kovalev was supported at the Annual Session in Berlin. The problems of the growing terrorist threats in Central Asia, which many parliamentarians rightly spoke about at the Autumn Meeting in Bishkek, are becoming ever more relevant. There is also a general interest by parliamentarians in establishing a common economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok. This is the aim of the Resolution on Connectivity and Alignment of Integration Processes in the OSCE Area, which was an initiative of the Russian delegation. We should like to recall the tasking of the International Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly with the preparation of proposals for holding a pilot pan-European parliamentary forum to discuss these issues.

The rise in intolerance, racism, xenophobia and aggressive nationalism, which you mentioned in your address, is no less important. We share your concern regarding the situation with freedom of the media, including the dissemination of fake news. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is used for narrow political interests to harass journalists who have an alternative point of view. However, we have seen no response from the Assembly to the cases of harassment of Russian media and journalists.

The migration crisis is a common problem. It is important to think about concrete steps for the return of refugees to their home countries by creating the appropriate economic conditions there, as the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, called for at the recent meeting in St. Petersburg with Sebastian Kurz, Federal Chancellor of Austria, which currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

We hope that the leadership of the Assembly will do all it can to develop precisely this kind of unifying agenda. You can count on constructive and purposeful co-operation with

Russian parliamentarians, for which you expressed a need today, in the establishment and discussion of this agenda.

Thank you for your attention.