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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1180th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

22 March 2018

On mass-scale sexual violence against children in the United Kingdom

Mr. Chairperson,

We were shocked by the recent revelations of the discovery of a paedophile network in the town of Telford, in the United Kingdom, whose victims, according to some sources, numbered more than 1,000 children.

A journalistic investigation carried out by British newspaper the *Sunday Mirror* over the course of around 18 months established that the criminals had been operating in this small town (which has a population of 170,000) since the 1980s. They abducted, raped, beat and pumped drugs into underage girls, held them prisoner, sold them as sex slaves, and in some cases killed them. Many of the victims were barely 11 years old.

The journalists succeeded in meeting with 12 of the victims. They were able to identify at least 70 rapists and abductors who had operated with impunity in the town for years. Some reports suggest that the number of criminals could have been much higher.

The witnesses' testimonies show that the police were well aware of what was happening in the town, and so were doctors, who performed abortions for these underage girls, and members of the Telford town council.

The reporters note that many of the criminals were of South Asian origin and were able to operate with impunity for decades simply because officials and law enforcement personnel did not want to investigate the case for fear of possible accusations of "racism" and "xenophobia". It was easier to accuse the children who had suffered and turn them from victims into "prostitutes". It is unthinkable that violators of the law should be shielded in this way in order to protect one's reputation or avoid potential outbursts of public outrage. And this situation lasted not a year or two but decades! We cannot but wonder how the British Government was able to remain ignorant of the situation for such a very long time. Or is it "highly likely" that they too were aware of the situation but were reluctant to step in?

Sheila Taylor, a representative of the organization NWG Network, which combats sexual exploitation of children (she took part in investigating similar crimes in the town of Rotherham), said that the true scale of the Telford tragedy will never be known because many of the victims are unlikely to admit what happened. We should like to ask our distinguished British colleagues: has anything been done to rehabilitate and defend the rights of these victims of violence?

Mr. Chairperson,

We are surprised by the silence on this matter from our colleagues from the European Union and also the United States of America, Canada, Switzerland, Norway and a number of other countries that are usually so swift to respond to human rights violations around the world.

We recall that at the 2004 OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Sofia, the participating States committed “to protect children from all forms of violence, including sexual exploitation”, and also stressed the importance of “respecting their special needs for protection and assistance.”

In Ljubljana in 2005, the participating States committed to ensuring that “all female victims of violence will be provided with full, equal and timely access to justice and effective remedies; medical and social assistance.”

In Brussels in 2006, the participating States reaffirmed that “sexual exploitation of children constitutes a grave and heinous crime, in many cases involving organized crime, that must be prevented, investigated, prosecuted and penalized with all available means.”

We call on the British authorities to treat the events in Telford with the utmost seriousness and to take exhaustive measures to ensure that criminals who violated children over many years bear the toughest penalties. Moreover, the police officers and local officials who displayed outrageous inaction in this situation should also be duly punished. Such tragedies should not happen again. We will follow the investigation closely.

We also hope to see a response from the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on these events in accordance with its mandate.

Thank you for your attention.