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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1116th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 October 2016

**On violation of freedom of the media in the United Kingdom**

I thank the distinguished Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom for her reply.

I must admit that we didn't expect a different reaction from her. The Russia Today television station has become extremely inconvenient to Western propaganda, but there are no legal grounds whatever for preventing it from broadcasting. Nor is it the first time that we have seen attempts by a number of Western countries, including the United Kingdom, to use any available means to force a television station from its media space.

As you know, the United Kingdom has a special body, the Office of Communications (Ofcom), which acts as a media regulator. This office can issue warnings to mass media, not just for disseminating deliberately false information but also for violating so-called "standards of impartiality" and the other rules of the British Broadcasting Code.

The regulator basically has the authority to make life difficult for mass media that in its opinion do not comply with the required "standards". Russia Today has experienced this to the full. We recall how Ofcom in late 2014 commented on the bias in the reporting by this Russian medium about the Ukrainian crisis and threatened to impose fines and withdraw its licence. Staff of Russia Today have found plenty of examples of biased reporting of events in Ukraine by the BBC and have addressed Ofcom in that regard. In reply, they are told that Ofcom oversees all stations except the BBC, and complaints must be addressed to the BBC itself.

This is thinly disguised censorship, which enables the British Government effectively to control the media so as to ensure that its particular points of view predominate.

The claim that it was not the station's account that was closed but the account of one of its suppliers does not tally with the facts. All of the rights to the accounts are held by the company RTTV.UK.

It might also be recalled that the demonization of Russia Today benefits those who are interested in using the financial resources allocated by the British Government to combat so-called “Russian propaganda”.

These methods are at odds with international standards and OSCE commitments regarding freedom of expression and freedom of the media. Moreover, they confirm the unwillingness of our colleagues to listen to the very same critical voices that they so ardently defend in relation to other countries.

As for doubts about the popularity of Russia Today, I should like merely to cite the opinion uttered by no less a person than the British Minister for Internet Safety and Security, Baroness Joanna Shields. Addressing students of the prestigious private school Heritage Hall in the US state of Oklahoma just the other day, she noted that Russia Today is one of the most popular stations on YouTube. In fact, Russia Today videos have over 4 billion hits. On the basis of this evidence, colleagues need to recognize the obvious fact that the Russian station is more popular than CNN, the BBC and other major news channels.

Thank you for your attention.