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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1307th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

25 March 2021

Lessons learned from the Khatyn tragedy and combating the glorification of Nazism

Madam Chairperson,

We thank our Belarusian colleagues for raising such an important and historically and morally relevant topic.

On 22 March 1943, the Belorussian village of Khatyn was destroyed. This tragedy has become a symbol of the horrendous atrocities committed by the Nazis and their henchmen in the occupied territories. We always remember it and mourn together with the people of Belarus.

The SS Special Unit Dirlewanger and the Schutzmannschaft Battalion 118, consisting mainly of Ukrainian nationalists, took part in the punitive operation. Incidentally, the first company of the latter was formed from servicemen of the Bukovyna Kurin. This was a unit of the Melnyk faction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, whom modern Ukraine has pronounced heroes and freedom fighters.

The police rounded up the entire population of the village, including children, women and the elderly, and locked them in a barn. They covered the building with straw, doused it with petrol and set it on fire. The doors collapsed under the weight of dozens of human bodies. With their clothes burning, gripped by terror and suffocating, people rushed to flee, but those who escaped from the flames were shot with machine guns. Here is a quote from the testimony of Ostap Knap, a member of the first company of Battalion 118: “We all got ready to shoot. ... Lukovich, the interpreter, set fire to the barn with a torch. The people in the barn started screaming, crying. The screams of the people burning and choking on the smoke were dreadful. Listening to them was unbearable. They made me feel terrible. As I remember it today, the battalion leader of staff Vasiura, deputy commander of the first company Meleshko, as well as Lakusta, Pasechnik, Pankiv, Katriuk, Kmit, Lukovich ... personally shot at the villagers in the barn.”

The executioners burned and shot to death 149 villagers, including 75 children under the age of 16. Only six managed to escape. Three children (Volodia and Sonia Yaskevich and Sasha Zhelobkovich) managed to hide from the Nazis, two others (Viktor Zhelobkovich and Anton Baranovsky), who were in the barn, also survived by some miracle. Of the adult villagers, only the 56-year-old village blacksmith Joseph Kaminsky survived. Burnt and wounded, he did not regain consciousness until late at night, when the

punitive troops had left the village. He had to endure another grievous blow: he found his mortally wounded son Adam among the bodies. He died in his father's arms.

Madam Chairperson,

The Russian Federation has consistently advocated the preservation of the historical truth about the events of the Second World War. We are convinced that the imperative task in combating the glorification of Nazism, racism and racial discrimination is for countries to join forces to prevent the revival of false "values" of the superiority of one nation, its religion and culture over other peoples and cultures. Every year, the Russian Federation, along with a wide range of co-sponsors, including from OSCE participating States, submits a draft resolution on combating the glorification of Nazism to the United Nations General Assembly. Once again, we call on those who vote against it – the United States of America and Ukraine, along with the abstaining countries – to stop covering up for those who perpetrated the Holocaust and burned to death the civilians of Khatyn.

Thank you for your attention.