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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1133rd MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

9 February 2017

**Regarding the sentencing of Alexei Navalny**

Mr. Chairperson,

Our European colleagues did not bother to warn us in advance that this question would be raised. But we assumed that they would not fail to seize this occasion. After all, nothing is off limits when it comes to maintaining the anti-Russian propaganda campaign.

Indeed, yesterday, on 8 February, the Leninsky District Court in Kirov convicted Alexei Navalny and businessman Pyotr Ofitserov in the case of the embezzlement of funds from the Kirovles company.

Those who do not take the trouble to study the background to this story should know that this case was heard for a second time. As early as in 2013, the court sentenced Alexei Navalny and Pyotr Ofitserov to a term of imprisonment, which was later changed to a suspended sentence. After the European Court of Human Rights found irregularities in the proceedings, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation quashed the verdict and sent the case for retrial.

Mr. Alexei Navalny also has another suspended sentence of three and a half years under his belt – a verdict which was passed in December 2014 by the Zamoskvoretsky District Court of Moscow. He was found guilty of embezzling funds totalling over 30 million roubles.

So the attempts to link this case with Mr. Alexei Navalny's political aspirations do not stand up to criticism, especially in view of his very low level of popularity. Incidentally, the court's verdict has caused outrage in a large part of Russian society, but only because of the excessive leniency, according to many, of the verdict.

We should like to emphasize once again that political views, professions or career aspirations cannot serve as grounds for exemption from liability in the event of violation of the law. Colleagues should also realize that they are trying to interfere in the judicial process,

in violation of a number of OSCE commitments on the independence of the judiciary (Copenhagen 1990, Moscow 1991, Istanbul 1999, Ljubljana 2005).

Our observations also fully apply to the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Mr. Michael Link, who hurriedly issued a press release yesterday that was clearly beyond the scope of his mandate. Mr. Link was apparently in such a hurry that he confused Kirov, where the court was located, with St. Petersburg (though the error has now been corrected). He was 1,500 kilometres out. It is clear that the ODIHR has no time to go into details when it comes to a loud statement on Russia.

Thank you for your attention.