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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1184th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 May 2018

**In response to the statements by the representatives of the United States of
America and Ukraine on World Press Freedom Day**

Mr. Chairperson,

If our distinguished colleagues would like an objective discussion about freedom of the press, we are ready to oblige.

First of all, let me provide a few facts on violations of media freedom in the United States of America.

According to the non-governmental organization Reporters Without Borders, the United States ranked 43rd (out of 180 countries) in the World Press Freedom Index in 2017. The US Government secretly monitors the activities of journalists, including with regard to identifying sources of confidential information. At the same time, the authorities continue to restrict the media's co-operation with officials.

Journalists in combat zones continue to be treated as "unprivileged" belligerents in accordance with the US Department of Defense Law of War Manual. According to this Manual, US military personnel have the right to open fire on war correspondents, take them prisoner and subject them to "punishment".

According to information on the website US Press Freedom Tracker, 19 arrests of media personnel were recorded in the United States in 2017, along with 12 searches of their equipment or its confiscation, 11 physical attacks and 4 detentions of journalists at the border.

For example, in December 2017, Emilie Raguso, a reporter with the independent information portal Berkeleyside, was subpoenaed during a trial to testify regarding information transmitted by one of her sources.

In January 2018, the police searched the home of the journalist Nora Donaghy and seized her mobile phone with confidential information. Ms. Donaghy is working on a documentary about the notorious music producer Marion Knight, who is accused of murder.

She was also subpoenaed to testify regarding her journalistic investigation, which included an interview with the defendant.

In October 2017, Mike Stark, a reporter working for the Shareblue Media news website supported by the Democratic Party, was arrested in the state of Virginia. The journalist had been videoing the campaign bus of Ed Gillespie, the Republican candidate for the post of Governor of Virginia, during an official event and was arrested after a scuffle with the police. According to the journalist, he was detained because of articles he had written criticizing Ed Gillespie's election campaign.

In 2017, under the pretext of dealing with "Russian interference" in the US election, the US authorities launched a broad campaign of harassment against Russian media. American journalistic collectives and organizations working with the RT and Sputnik news agencies in the United States were forced to register as foreign agents.

Furthermore, Russian media were denied accreditation with the US Congress. The authorities refused to extend the visa of the head of the TASS bureau, Andrei Shitov, who had worked in the United States for more than 15 years.

This is by no means a complete list of such incidents.

We can talk at length about the situation regarding "freedom" of the media in Ukraine. Let me begin by expressing once more my grave concern at the lack of progress in the investigation into the murders of the journalists Anatoly Klyan, Anton Voloshin, Igor Kornelyuk, Andrei Stenin, Andrea Rocchelli, Oles Buzina, Sergei Dolgov, Vyacheslav Veremiy, Pavel Sheremet and others. I am forced to note that not only the Ukrainian Government but also its supporters in the United States and a number of European Union countries close their eyes to these crimes.

In addition to attacks, media representatives face other challenges in Ukraine. Under the pretext of combating "propaganda", a campaign of brutal repression of opposition journalists and total cleansing of the information space continues apace in that country. In November and December 2017, with the connivance of the authorities, radical nationalists blocked access to the Newsone television studio. In February 2018, access to the Vesti media premises was closed under the pretext of investigations. As a result of the actions of security forces, the media company's property was damaged and it was forced off the air.

Trumped-up charges of "separatism" are used to force reporters to remain silent. For example, in late September 2017, the journalists Dmitry Vasilets and Yevgeny Timonin were found guilty of the trumped-up charge of "assisting separatism" and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment. Fabricated criminal charges against the editor-in-chief of the Strana.ua newspaper, Igor Guzhva, obliged him to flee Ukraine in early February 2018 and request political asylum in Austria. The journalist Vasily Muravitsky, whom Amnesty International has called a prisoner of conscience, is facing trumped-up charges of "treason" and "complicity in terrorism". He is threatened with up to 15 years' imprisonment.

The practice of expulsions and compiling lists of journalists subject to sanctions remains in force. In 2017 alone, more than 60 Russian media representatives were refused entry to Ukraine. In August 2017, the Security Service of Ukraine deported two Spanish journalists (Antonio Pampliega and Manuel Angel Sastre) and two Russian journalists

(Tamara Nersaesyanyan and Anna Kurbatova) from the country because of “activities harmful to national interests” and banned them from entering the country for the next three years. The Rossiya 24 correspondent, Natalia Goncharova, was expelled quite recently.

And now for the latest news. As reported, on 1 May Ukrainian border guards refused to allow entry into the country of Italian, Czech and Russian citizens travelling to Odessa to cover the anniversary of the tragedy at Trade Union House.

I cannot fail to mention the notorious Mirotvorets website, which is now also protected by the US authorities, which have granted it an American “residence permit”. Placing journalists on this website’s blacklist threatens their safety, life and health.

Earlier, we distributed within the OSCE an extensive list of freedom of the media violations by the Ukrainian authorities. I would be interested to know from our distinguished Ukrainian colleague whether the Ukrainian Government is doing anything to investigate and prevent crimes against journalists in Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention.