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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1316th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 May 2021

The first anniversary of the death of George Floyd in the United States of America

Madam Chairperson,

The death of one person is usually a tragedy only for that person's family, friends and colleagues. The death of George Floyd, an African American, was not only a personal tragedy but also yet another example of systemic racism and police violence, one which sent shock waves through all strata of US society. Unfortunately, this has proved insufficient to radically change the situation in the United States of America for the better. The facts indicate that the problem remains a serious one.

We would remind you that on 11 April a young African American, Daunte Wright, died as a result of a fatal shot fired from a police officer's service revolver. He was just over six months away from celebrating his twenty-first birthday, an age he will now never reach. Remarkably, the killing occurred not far from the scene of the fatal incident of May last year involving Mr. Floyd.

According to the US non-governmental organization Mapping Police Violence, 414 people have died at the hands of the police in 2021 alone. Moreover, in 2020, African Americans accounted for 28 per cent of such deaths, even though they make up only 13 per cent of the country's population. It has been noted that African Americans are three times more likely than members of the white population or Hispanics to become victims of law enforcement officers' violence. In 47 out of 50 major US cities, African Americans were shot by the police far more frequently. For example, in Chicago, 22 times as many African Americans as whites were killed by law enforcement officers between 2013 and 2020.

The reaction of the law enforcement authorities to the massive demonstrations taking place on the streets of US cities as a sign of protest against racism within the police also serves to highlight the systemic and chronic nature of this problem. Brutality is the keyword used by local human rights defenders in their assessments in this regard. In April, protesters in Brooklyn Center (Minnesota) and Portland (Oregon) were brutally dispersed – to the accompaniment of whizzing rubber bullets, clouds of tear gas and exploding stun grenades. As a result, at least two people were injured; scores were arrested.

Interestingly, local legislators are also contributing to the pressure on protesters and the criminalization of their lawful actions. The United Nations Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Clément Voule, recently expressed such an

opinion, lambasting the legislative initiatives in a number of states. Laws violating the right to peaceful assembly have already been adopted in Florida and Oklahoma. Seven more states are in the process of doing so. According to Mr. Voule, vague definitions and ambiguous interpretations, along with “draconian” penalties and other measures introduced by these new laws, contribute to violence against protesters and increased impunity for unlawful acts against demonstrators, including, as he specifies, impunity for injuring or killing protesters.

Furthermore, the United Nations expert believes that such steps are part of a legislative campaign aimed at suppressing the protests that intensified after the killing of George Floyd. The figures he cites also confirm this: 93 similar “anti-protest” bills have been introduced in 35 states since May 2020. Moreover, Mr. Voule emphasizes that the main blow is directed at anti-racist actions. He concludes that the United States needs to come to its senses and remember that restrictions on peaceful assembly contravene international law and the country’s Constitution.

Thus, systemic racism and police violence remain a burning issue for the United States. Other negative phenomena such as neo-Nazism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination on ethnic or religious grounds are becoming increasingly visible against this backdrop.

It is high time that our US colleagues made serious efforts to find a way out of the current dire human rights situation in the United States. We call on the relevant OSCE structures to provide them with every possible assistance in this within the framework of their mandates.

Thank you for your attention.