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**STATEMENT BY  
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE  
1068th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 September 2015

**On the refusal of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to observe the elections in Azerbaijan**

Mr. Chairperson,

The refusal of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to observe the parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan, scheduled for 1 November, once again confirms the validity of our concern about the Office's working procedures and the need to restore order there.

The ODIHR's task is to provide assistance to participating States, not to tell them what to do, while imposing its decisions upon them – especially when such decisions are blatantly politicized.

We consider the ODIHR's refusal to engage in constructive dialogue with Azerbaijan on organizing election observation and its use of blackmail tactics on a "take it or leave it" basis to be unacceptable. The ODIHR is neither an external auditor nor a supranational agency that delivers verdicts on the legitimacy of elections that have taken place. There is not one word in a single OSCE document about the independence and autonomy of that body. That is simply the latest fiction to be peddled by the United States of America and the European Union. According to its mandate, the Office is a specialized OSCE executive structure which should act in strict accordance with its mandate and follow the instructions of its collective bodies in order to assist participating States.

We should like to recall that no methodology for election observation by the OSCE has yet been collectively agreed upon within the OSCE. The so-called rules, which were independently developed by the ODIHR without the involvement of States, are not some kind of "gold standard", as they are arrogantly referred to by some, and do not create any obligations for participating States.

We are surprised by the ODIHR's references to the 1990 Copenhagen Document, which attributes the extent of election observation to the competence of the relevant State's legislation.

Over the course of the ODIHR's work, a number of reasonable doubts have accumulated as to the independence, impartiality and professionalism of its activities. Unfortunately, the dubious aspects of the Office's activities have not been rectified, but rather passed on.

Mr. Chairperson,

In its activities, the ODIHR frequently goes beyond the scope of collectively agreed and consensus-based mechanisms and allows itself to be used for political purposes. This seriously harms its reputation and could result in loss of trust and legitimacy. The Office must not be allowed to turn from a mechanism of co-operation and assistance into a tool for confrontation.

More transparency is also needed with regard to spending. In particular, we expect the ODIHR to provide a detailed report of where the funds that were saved thanks to its refusal to observe elections in Azerbaijan will go. In a wider sense, we believe that itemized reports of the Mission's expenditures for election observation would be extremely useful to participating States in order to enable them to understand how resources are allocated for the Office's activities.

We will take into account the situation as it stands during future budget discussions.

In conclusion, I should like once again to note the need to develop uniform rules and modalities for election monitoring, which are agreed upon within the OSCE and would also *inter alia* regulate the size of observation missions.

Thank you for your attention.