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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1189th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 June 2018

**In response to the address by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia,
Ms. Marija Pejčinović Burić**

Mr. Chairperson,
Madam Minister,

We congratulate the Republic of Croatia on its first ever Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. We are grateful for the detailed presentation of the Croatian Chairmanship's approaches to the work of the Council of Europe and to its co-operation with the OSCE.

Russia traditionally attaches great importance to the work of the Council of Europe. We consider this organization to be one of the central pillars of the common legal framework of the European continent, which is formed, among other things, thanks to the unique system of conventional elements. The OSCE and the Council of Europe are faced with the similar tasks of building a system of equal and indivisible security.

We share the assessment indicating the importance of multilateral efforts to address security challenges in the Euro-Atlantic area. In the current international situation, in the wake of regressive thinking that seemingly harks back to the bygone era of bloc confrontation, the Strasbourg forum, conceived as an independent, self-sufficient, multidisciplinary co-operation mechanism, is particularly in demand. We recall that the Council of Europe was created in many ways in an attempt to prevent a recurrence of the catastrophe of the Second World War.

Russia remains ready for joint, consensus-based action to strengthen democratic security in Europe. Here it is also possible to draw parallels between the work of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, in particular, regarding the role of the Chairmanship. Both in Strasbourg and in Vienna, much depends on the Chairmanship's desire to make efforts to find unifying themes and acceptable solutions. No less important is the desire to maintain a balanced approach, to resist the temptation to put across and impose one's own perceptions without taking into account the cultural diversity and national traditions of others. Needless to

say, the artificial politicization of the agenda in both the OSCE and the Council of Europe only weakens the two organizations.

Not surprisingly, these forums co-operate in important areas agreed in 2005. Each of these areas – combating terrorism and trafficking in human beings, the rights of national minorities, tolerance and non-discrimination – are particularly relevant. Meanwhile, it is counter-productive to impose here certain issues that are very far from achieving consensus.

It is gratifying that the priorities of the Croatian Chairmanship, voiced by you, Madam Minister, in many ways coincide with the Russian approaches. For example, we consider more than vital the topic of effective protection of the rights of national minorities and vulnerable groups in the context of the continued abuses of the rights of millions of Russian and Russian-speaking people in particular OSCE participating States and Council of Europe Member States. In addition, no solution has been found to the chronic problem of mass statelessness. There are examples of a deliberate reduction of education in minority languages and of the exclusion of these languages from official use.

This same goal was shared by the discriminatory Law on Education, adopted in September 2017 by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and signed by the country's President. The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe has failed to criticize this law. The application of the European Convention on Human Rights has been suspended completely in a large part of the territory of Ukraine. The Council of Europe cannot turn a blind eye to the appalling human rights violations in Ukraine. We recently presented at the Permanent Council a detailed analysis of the Ukrainian Government's non-compliance with a number of norms of conventions of the Council of Europe.

In part, another of Croatia's priorities – decentralization in the context of strengthening local government and self-government – is connected with the topic of protection of national minorities. We know quite a few examples where the observance of such rights was ensured through the actions of local authorities vested with the necessary amount of authority.

We welcome the Croatian Chairmanship's plans to organize on 18 and 19 June a meeting on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. We support the holding on 21 June of a seminar on the rights of older persons and an event on the protection of children's rights in the digital environment scheduled for 18 and 19 September.

We cannot turn a blind eye to the growing manifestations of aggressive nationalism, xenophobia, racism and neo-Nazism in several countries. More attention is needed to combat discrimination against Christians, Muslims and followers of other religions.

Only depoliticized work can contribute to addressing issues. We need a unifying agenda, which facilitates inter-State dialogue, and, of course, genuine commitment to finding consensus solutions to the most complex issues. We trust that it is on this basis that Croatia will conduct its Chairmanship. We wish our Croatian colleagues every success.

Thank you for your attention.