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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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1324th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

16 July 2021

On the Vilnius conference dealing with reforms in Ukraine

Madam Chairperson,

On 7 and 8 July, there took place in Vilnius a conference devoted to a review of the reforms that have been implemented in Ukraine since 2014. According to official reports, a key role was played in the conference by those who are the inspiration for the current reforms in that country, namely by the representatives of the United States of America and a number of European Union countries. The Ukrainian leadership in turn reported on the work done, requested new advice and asked for help in meeting benchmarks.

On the whole, what we have here is one of the glaring illustrations of the notorious external steering of Ukraine. Its current authorities eagerly hold conversations with foreign partners about the outlines of the country's future set-up while showing scant regard for what the inhabitants of Ukraine themselves think. There is no place in these discussions for, say, the residents of Donbas along both sides of the line of contact, who have had their political rights curtailed by the resolution of 15 July 2020 of the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament).

One could talk at length about the "successes" of the foreign "guardianship" of Ukraine, a country that is rapidly losing what is left of its national sovereignty. The most eloquent assessment of all this is provided by the facts. According to some sociological surveys conducted over the past few months, around 70 per cent of the inhabitants of Ukraine are convinced that their country is moving in the wrong direction. Or consider, for example, fresh data from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), published in July this year, which indicate that Ukraine performs worst out of all the European countries in terms of the total number of people experiencing malnutrition: the figure is around 9.8 million people, or approximately one quarter of the population, of whom around 1.1 million people are suffering from acute malnutrition.

Against this backdrop in Ukraine, State assets that retain their value are being sold off; the infrastructure continues to deteriorate. It is not long until the moratorium on the sale of farmland to foreigners is repealed – one of the reforms on which the current foreign "minders" of Ukraine so insisted.

Incidentally, the so-called judicial reform was also a focus of the conference in Vilnius. A lot was said there about moving closer to the standards of an independent and fair system of justice – which, for

some reason, is meant to be ensured by the involvement of foreigners, who are to be implanted in Ukrainian judicial structures and bodies.

However, it is remarkable that the participants in the conference were in no rush to express themselves about the most prominent issues, those that really are of essential importance to Ukrainian society – such as the failure of the law enforcement authorities and the judiciary to identify and punish those responsible for the shooting on the Maidan that triggered the February 2014 coup d'état; or to track down and convict the real perpetrators of the murders and brutal atrocities committed against peaceful protesters in Odessa on 2 May 2014 and Mariupol on 9 May 2014. The reforms being implemented have not brought the fair administration of justice any closer as far as these cases are concerned.

A measure of the “successes” of judicial reform in Ukraine is given by the decision of 14 July by a panel of judges from the Supreme Court of Ukraine sitting as an administrative court, whereby President Zelenskyy's decree on certain issues pertaining to the national security of Ukraine (Decree No. 214 of 27 March 2021) was pronounced unlawful and overturned. I would remind you that, through this decree, the President contrived to dismiss the head of the Constitutional Court, Oleksandr Tupytskyi. The court found that the Head of State did not have the authority to do that.

There is no doubt that reforms not tied to a weakening or loss of sovereignty and aimed at truly enhancing the effectiveness of public institutions could become the basis for successful development. However, Ukraine is being given to understand in no uncertain terms that the fate of reforms in the country depends not only, and indeed not that much, on the will of the country's inhabitants or their representatives. Yet, according to Article V of the Constitution, “[t]he people are the bearers of sovereignty and the only source of power in Ukraine.”

It is telling how, in his interview of 20 June with the Turkish news agency Anadolu, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dmytro Kuleba, posed a rhetorical question to Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic partners: “How many reforms exactly do you want?” Nor is it a coincidence that President Zelenskyy pondered the same question in Vilnius, where he asked the country's foreign partners, and not the people of Ukraine, for “an exhaustive list of reforms” that could be used to reach various milestones in foreign policy – milestones which, by the way, were announced without a prior inclusive nationwide dialogue.

To sum up. We are witnessing how a number of processes that are being made out to be brilliant reforms enjoy neither public nor legal support in Ukraine. Instead, Ukrainian society is being invited, under anti-Russian and Russophobic slogans, to continue giving up its sovereignty. Such an approach clearly does not have the makings of a “success story”.

Thank you for your attention.