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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1219th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 March 2019

On the occasion of International Women's Day

Mr. Chairperson,

Once again I congratulate all our esteemed female colleagues on the coming International Women's Day. I should like to wish them good health, love, happiness and also creative inspiration for new achievements in both their professional and personal lives. We are grateful to Ambassador Andrej Benedejčič and Ms. Barbora Burajová for their interesting presentations.

This celebratory day is traditionally very popular in Russia, where it has even been declared a national holiday. Women's Day was first observed in our country on 2 March 1913, when lectures were held in St. Petersburg on women's suffrage and on the protection of motherhood by the State.

Russia was one of the first countries in the world not just to proclaim women's equality but also to set about putting that equality into practice. A glance at history reminds us that it was in the Grand Duchy of Finland, then part of the Russian Empire, where, in 1907, Lucina Hagman became the first woman in the world to be elected to local parliament. A year earlier, women in that same territory had gained the right to vote in elections. This right was enshrined in law everywhere else in Russia in 1917.

In our country, 8 March is not simply an occasion for congratulations. It represents an opportunity to show our gratitude and genuine respect for women as workers and as mothers. As emphasized by the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vladimir Putin, at the Second Eurasian Women's Forum, which took place in St. Petersburg in September 2018, our National Action Strategy for Women (adopted in 2017) is an integrated and multifaceted strategy. It includes measures to assist small businesses and individual entrepreneurs (also in the social sector), to support volunteering and non-profit organizations, and to promote education and public health.

Women today account for 51 per cent of the working population in Russia. There are whole branches of work that one could label as "female", namely teaching, health services,

culture and, to a considerable extent, also journalism. Women make up a majority of the staff in State and municipal government bodies, too. Russian women are also successfully realizing their potential in business, where they hold 43 per cent of management positions, which, by the way, means that Russia is ranked first in the world for that indicator.

Mr. Chairperson,

The OSCE can boast some solid results in the advancement of equality between women and men, including the Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2004). We should also mention here the work of the OSCE Secretariat's Gender Section. There do continue to be problems, though. Surely it is in our common interest to overcome existing stereotypes and career restrictions, to make it possible for girls to receive much-needed education, and to create favourable conditions for women to be able to work and run their own business. Combating violence against women in all its forms and manifestations remains of paramount importance. It is gratifying to note that at the Ministerial Council meeting in Milan last year we managed to unite and adopt a Decision on that issue.

We should not forget about the need to support the family as an institution and, specifically, motherhood and childhood. It is a pity that hardly any attention is paid by our Organization to these important matters. Yet, to do so would be particularly relevant in view of how destructive neo-liberal models are being aggressively thrust upon us. It is essential to show respect and create an enabling environment for women who have chosen to care for a family and children, which entails work that is often inconspicuous but hard work all the same.

Thank you for your attention.