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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1141st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

6 April 2017

**In response to the report by the Director of the Office for
Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Mr. Michael Georg Link**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Link,

First of all, we thank you for your sincere condolences in connection with the tragic events in St. Petersburg.

We are grateful for your informative statement. Since today is the last Permanent Council meeting at which you present your report as the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), we should like to begin by thanking you for your work in this post. Being the head of such a large executive structure and developing its work in the interests of all 57 participating States is not an easy task. However, we are convinced that there can be no alternative to such an approach.

It is no secret that our relations with the Office can hardly be called ideal. But despite this, we have managed to establish meaningful co-operation on a number of issues. And this is largely your personal achievement.

We welcome some changes in the Office's focus on the activities you identified at the Permanent Council meeting last year. In particular, you stressed the need to pay greater attention to combating manifestations of neo-Nazism. The thuggish behaviour of nationalists in Ukraine and the glorification of the Nazi accomplices in the Baltic States require a clear and prompt response from the ODIHR. Attempts to falsify the history of the Second World War do not stop. We should like to ask what the Office has accomplished in this area?

An extremely alarming signal is the growth of anti-Christian, anti-Islamic and anti-Semitic manifestations in the OSCE area, especially in the European Union countries. The ODIHR's unequivocal position is also very much in demand here.

We are pleased to note that the Office is increasing its focus on protecting children. Unfortunately, for a long time this topic occupied an unjustifiably modest place in the work

of the ODIHR and the OSCE as a whole. The Office should help to ensure that this issue is viewed from various perspectives. For example, it is important to supplement it with the issues of education, as well as the role of the family in the upbringing of children.

In our opinion, the Office's work should also be intensified in a number of other topical areas concerning a whole range of economic, social and cultural rights, respect for the inviolability of private and family life, the fight against statelessness, freedom of movement and contacts between people. It is necessary that the Office in practice be guided by the principle of equality and indivisibility of all human rights, as you, Mr. Director, once correctly noted.

With regard to the promotion by several countries of the concept of the "independence" and "autonomy" of the ODIHR, our position on this matter is well known. We consider this message harmful. The Office's activities are defined by the decisions of the collective bodies of the OSCE and the approved mandate of the Office. Both budgetary work and ODIHR extrabudgetary projects should not go beyond the OSCE commitments, as well as consensus decisions and mandates. On the contrary, we consider it important to strengthen transparency in the work of the ODIHR and its accountability to the participating States.

Many unresolved issues remain on the electoral track. There is a geographical imbalance in the focus of election observation missions, which is still on countries "east of Vienna", where the Office sends full-scale missions of hundreds of observers. At the same time, many of the electoral processes in some Western countries for some reason remain outside the ODIHR's field of vision. We are puzzled by the situation where it is known in advance that elections are going to be held, the government invites the Office to take part in the observation, but in the end no one goes. Not even a needs assessment mission, as required by the ODIHR methodology, is sent. We regard this approach as a manifestation of "double standards" and the dividing of countries into "first and second class". We believe that this practice should be eradicated, for example, building on the experience of deploying a full-scale mission to the United States general elections in November 2016.

The OSCE still does not have a collectively agreed methodological framework for monitoring elections. Those principles and rules on the basis of which the ODIHR is currently building its work have not been approved by the participating States and cannot create obligations for them. Let me remind you that a solution to this issue was proposed by a number of countries, including Russia, back in 2007 on the basis of the draft Basic principles for the organization of OSCE/ODIHR observation of national elections.

The references of some colleagues to the "Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation" and the "Code of Conduct for International Election Observers" (adopted in New York in 2005) raise many questions. It is unclear how and by whom they were approved, which of the participating States gave the ODIHR the mandate to become a party to those instruments.

We believe it is necessary for the Office to optimize the expenses for the activities of the observation missions. You can, for example, reduce the composition of the "core team" of experts and the period of their stay in a country. This would allow part of the budget to be released for monitoring in those States for which the ODIHR allegedly lacks resources.

However, for the solution of these problems, the political will of the Office's leadership is of course necessary.

You, Mr. Director, mentioned Crimea in your report. In this regard, we should like to recall that we provided ODIHR observers with the opportunity to monitor the election campaign and the elections in this Russian region. Despite the consistent calls here to allow OSCE human rights institutions into Crimea, the ODIHR abstained from such a trip, citing lack of consensus.

In conclusion, we should like to reiterate our continued readiness for meaningful co-operation with the ODIHR and its future Director. To you, Mr. Link, we should like to wish you success in any new field.

Thank you for your attention.