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PC.DEL/118/22
3 February 2022

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1353rd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 February 2022

In response to the address by the Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy, Benedetto Della Vedova

Mr. Chairperson,

We are pleased to welcome Mr. Benedetto Della Vedova to this meeting of the Permanent Council. I should like to mention the timeliness of your address to the OSCE.

I don't think anyone in this room will be surprised by my statement that Europe is now at a crossroads. The shift in values that is sweeping Western societies is destroying the classic ideal of constructing a common legal and humanitarian space. Under the impact of neoliberal ideas, the multifaceted European identity created over the centuries is being eroded. Europeans are engaged in an intellectual search for their place in a rapidly changing world, against a background in which the philosophy of building a "common European home" has fallen victim to a Euro-Atlantic solidarity under the spurious pretext of external threats. The costs of this identity process are in many ways at the source of the current crises in the Euro-Atlantic region.

It is regrettable that the European space, which was meant to be unified, is being cluttered with new barriers. This includes the barbed wire of the NATO military infrastructure, which is proliferating like mushrooms after the rain and which is moving very close to Russia's borders. It also includes the illegitimate sanctions regimes, which smack of mundane trade and economic protectionism. And it includes the health and epidemiological barriers that divide people into those vaccinated with the "right" and the "wrong" vaccines and restrict the assertion of their socio-economic rights. A fundamental obstacle, however, is the aggressive formation of world-view paradigms with a selective interpretation of obligations and the devaluation of the collective basis for resolving differences with account taken of mutual interests.

Against this backdrop, we expect that Italy, which began its six-month "watch" in Strasbourg last November, will contribute to an improvement in the situation. The Italian Government's approach is very much in line with Russia's understanding of the depoliticized and multidimensional work of the Council of Europe. In particular, the desire to develop co-operation in the fields of culture (with a conference of Ministers of Culture planned for April this year for the first time since 2013), the regulation of artificial

intelligence (with work on a draft convention on this subject already having started), and interreligious dialogue (with a high-level conference being considered for the first time since 2017) deserves support.

Italy has stepped on to the captain's bridge in a difficult health and epidemiological situation. Every day, the incidence of the disease breaks new records in almost every country. As you correctly pointed out in your address to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 25 January this year, the pandemic remains one of the most difficult challenges. In such circumstances, we believe it is particularly important to unite to protect the lives and health of our citizens and prevent the deterioration of their socio-economic situation. We therefore support your call for the accession by the maximum number of countries as soon as possible to the Council of Europe Convention on the counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes involving threats to public health (the MEDICRIME Convention) and for their active promotion of social rights based on the European Social Charter.

In the light of these challenges, there is a need to revisit the unifying agenda on the Council of Europe platform. The priorities outlined in the programme of the Italian Chairmanship, such as protecting and expanding the rights of children and women, working with young people, improving the justice system, regulating artificial intelligence, and interreligious dialogue, could contribute to this. Co-operation in areas such as health, sport, combating terrorism, corruption and drug trafficking, and history education could have a positive multiplier effect.

In the current difficult context, the OSCE's engagement with the Council of Europe is of particular importance. We believe that the activities of these two pan-European organizations should be closely co-ordinated in order to avoid duplication and the dissipation of resources. Co-operation should be transparent and collaborative. Non-consensus methodology, unilateral approaches and confrontational language are unacceptable.

We need to further develop co-operation in the four priority areas, namely combating terrorism and trafficking in human beings, ensuring the rights of national minorities, tolerance and non-discrimination.

However, the situation in Ukraine, where human rights abuses and harassment of the Russian and Russian-speaking population and national minorities are systemic, remains a matter of particular concern. By continuing to clamp down, the Ukrainian Government is flouting international commitments, Council of Europe standards and even the provisions of its own Constitution. Take, for example, the discriminatory legislation that has curtailed the rights of millions of citizens in the areas of language, education and religion. It only further divides society. There is no need to look far for examples. The new provisions of the language law came into force in January this year, depriving a number of Russian-language print media of the possibility of unhindered publication. Many of them will be forced to close down. Domestic legislation has been manipulated to suit the political situation, and the recommendations of international institutions have been completely ignored.

For example, in the current academic year, all schools with teaching in Russian and other non-European Union and non-indigenous languages have been forced to switch to Ukrainian. As of next year, 2023, native-language teaching in State secondary schools will no longer be available to other national minorities either. The Ukrainian Government is deliberately pursuing a policy of eliminating all things Russian, forced Ukrainization and assimilation of the non-Ukrainian-speaking population.

The current Ukrainian authorities, who came to power under the slogan of protecting the rights of Russian-speaking citizens and creating the conditions for a genuine national consensus, are doing exactly the opposite. In particular, they are openly flirting with die-hard neo-Nazis and radicals of all stripes. The anniversaries of the births of Nazi collaborators, most notably Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych, are

celebrated with particular fanfare and under police protection. Organizers of marches with xenophobic and racist slogans are invited for questioning not by law enforcement agencies but by national television stations. How can this contribute to the unity of Ukraine, where thousands of peaceful Ukrainians and people of other nationalities died during the war at the hands of the aforementioned Nazi henchmen?

The answer to the question of whether the discriminatory practices of the Ukrainian authorities in the field of human rights are in line with the objective of building a pan-European space is also clear.

We cannot ignore the risks to the stability of the Council of Europe system posed by the politicization of the European Court of Human Rights. The Court's verdicts in individual and inter-State actions against our country, based on the dubious doctrine of "effective control", are not only legally untenable but also unenforceable. It goes without saying that we are committed to our obligations within the Council of Europe. However, we consider the creation of artificial obstacles in Russia's relations with the organization to be unacceptable.

In conclusion, I should like to express the belief that only by combining our efforts will we be able to avoid a course of fruitless, destructive confrontation. The organization must not be allowed to lose its capacity for constructive co-operation. Russia has consistently advocated steps aimed at overcoming differences and creating an atmosphere conducive to reaching compromise solutions.

Thank you for your attention.