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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1186th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 May 2018

On the anniversary of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars

Mr. Chairperson,

The Crimean Tatars did indeed suffer a great deal during the period of repression, having endured deportation from their native territory. Together with them, we remember this tragic fact.

And it was only Crimea's reunification with Russia that made the rehabilitation, revival and development of the Crimean Tatar ethnic group, their language and culture, which had previously been ignored or disregarded by the Ukrainian authorities, a reality.

On 21 April 2014, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, signed Decree No. 268 on measures to rehabilitate the Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Crimean Tatar and German peoples and to provide State support for their revival and development. Later the Italian people were added to this list. A set of measures was developed to restore historical justice through the political, social and spiritual revival of peoples subjected to illegal political repression on ethnic and other grounds, including administrative expulsions.

In addition, the scope of Law No. 1107-1 of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic of 26 April 1991 on the rehabilitation of repressed peoples and Law No. 1761-1 of the Russian Federation of 18 October 1991 on the rehabilitation of the victims of political repression was fully extended to include the Crimean Tatars. As a result, more than 20,000 certificates of rehabilitation and certificates of the right to social support measures from the Russian State have already been issued to citizens.

Decree No. 268 paved the way for comprehensive measures related to the complete rehabilitation of the Crimean Tatar people – political and social, economic and cultural. This is being achieved, in particular, on the basis of the federal special-purpose programme for the socio-economic development of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol until 2020, which was adopted on 11 August 2014.

In 2015, with the aim of supporting the rehabilitated peoples of Crimea, the State programme of the Republic of Crimea for the period 2015–2017 to strengthen the unity of the Russian nation and the ethnic and cultural development of the peoples of Russia was developed and approved. Large communities are now being set up in Crimea to accommodate formerly repressed peoples, primarily Crimean Tatars. More funds are spent each year on this in Russian Crimea than in the past, and amounts are also increasing with each year. The Crimean Tatars are now beginning to be allocated long-awaited social housing.

Large-scale cultural events using public funds are regularly organized for returnees at the republic and municipal level. The Crimean Tatar academic theatre continues to operate successfully. Literature is published in the Crimean Tatar language and the media, including *Yani Dunya* (New World), *Qirim*, *Yildiz* (Star) and others, receive support. For the first time in the history of Crimea, the Crimean Tatar television channel Millet (Nation) and radio station Vetan (Motherland) have started operation, and the public Crimean Tatar television and radio corporation is operating. Their network and airtime are being expanded, new programmes are appearing, and material is being prepared using modern equipment. Around 200 people are employed by just these two media outlets. The Ismail Gasprinsky media centre has been established and is currently preparing around 30 publications in the Crimean Tatar language or about the Crimean Tatar people for release this year.

Commemorative events marking the anniversary of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars are being held. The first stage of a memorial complex to the deportation victims has been opened in the village of Siren in the district of Bakhchysarai.

The participation of Crimean Tatars in the representative bodies of the Republic of Crimea and also in the government and local administrations is ensured. In 2016, a member of the Crimean Tatar ethnic group was elected to the Russian State Duma for the first time in 100 years. The overwhelming majority of Crimean Tatars – more than 90 per cent – have applied for and received a Russian Federation passport. Crimean Tatars are also receiving Russian title deeds, including deeds to property in Crimea and beyond.

The Crimean Tatar language is recognized in the 2014 Constitution as a State language of the Republic of Crimea alongside Russian and Ukrainian. The number of students receiving their education in the Crimean Tatar language is growing. A new Crimean Tatar school for 900 pupils opened for the 2017–2018 academic year. The Crimean Engineering and Pedagogical University concentrates on training for personnel among the Crimean Tatars. Kindergartens are being built in areas with a large Crimean Tatar population – an urgent question that had not been resolved when Crimea was part of Ukraine. A complete set of textbooks for secondary education in the Crimean Tatar language has been produced, with a total of 66 titles.

The Crimean authorities make arrangements each year to organize the hajj of Crimean Muslims. Since 2014, the number of pilgrims to Mecca from Crimea has more than quadrupled. In 2016, construction started on a new cathedral mosque and muftiate administration in a prominent location in Simferopol and is scheduled for completion in 2019. Documents are being processed for dozens of mosques previously built without the necessary paperwork and with an uncertain future because of the intransigent position adopted by the Ukrainian authorities.

In 2016, the General Directorate of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation for the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol registered 70 local and 14 regional autonomous ethnic and cultural organizations active on the territory of the peninsula. These include several Crimean Tatar organizations.

Many other measures are being taken to protect the rights and interests of the Crimean Tatar people as well as other citizens or ethnic communities.

During the “defence” of the combined 23rd and 24th periodic reports of the Russian Federation to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (Geneva, 31 July to 25 August 2017), a number of Crimean Tatar, Ukrainian and other organizations from Crimea (Qirim Birligi, the Civic Chamber of the Republic of Crimea, the Ukrainian Community of Crimea regional non-governmental organization, the Paisiy Hilendarski Crimean Republic Society of Bulgarians and the Regional German National and Cultural Autonomy of the Republic of Crimea) presented “alternative” reports on the situation regarding the rights of national minorities in this constituent entity of the Russian Federation, confirming the absence of any discrimination.

Statements by foreign public and political figures who have visited this region of Russia in recent years also testify to the absence of ethnic discrimination. For example, Bulgarian, Serbian, Greek, French, German, Israeli and Czech parliamentarians have visited Crimea, as have the former Prime Minister of Japan, journalists from Poland, representatives of the Center for Citizen Initiatives, an American non-governmental organization, and others. Just a few days ago, on 14 May, an official delegation from France including delegates from the municipality of Marignane visited Crimea. Thus, the accusations that Russia is not allowing foreign representatives access to this constituent entity of the Russian Federation are groundless.

Similarly, the claims about the allegedly deteriorating situation of this ethnic group are completely unfounded. They serve only the political ambitions of those who cannot accept the lawful return of Crimea to Russia.

Thank you for your attention.