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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1116th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 October 2016

**On the violation of the rights of refugees and migrants in the
European Union**

Mr. Chairperson,

The recent events surrounding the refugee camp near the French town of Calais force us once again to turn to the issue of the observance of the rights of migrants and refugees in the Member States of the European Union (EU). According to the Chair of the British Parliament's Home Affairs Select Committee, Ms. Yvette Cooper, the uncertainty regarding the fate of the deportees from that camp could lead to hundreds of unaccompanied child migrants "slipping into the hands of the smuggler gangs and traffickers". This is only one of the possible negative consequences of the EU's migration policy.

A recent report by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) also confirms this. According to its assessment, given the tougher migration policy in the EU, refugees and migrants are facing increasing difficulties in exercising their right to family reunification. The main reasons for this are the reduction of the period in which family members of persons who have been granted asylum are entitled to a simplified procedure for entry into the EU. The length and high cost of the procedures for processing visas for family members create an additional obstacle. For example, in some cases it takes up to a year just for visa documents to be issued.

As the FRA notes, the EU does not have "systematic and reliable" data either on the number of migrants admitted or the actual number of family reunification requests submitted. There is no effective exchange of information within the EU on migrants looking for their relatives or being sought by them. In many cases, this concerns minors.

The decision-making process on family reunification usually takes several months. In the event that migrants' applications are rejected, they are frequently not even informed of the reasons why.

A further problem noted by the FRA is the lengthy process of identifying persons who have died crossing the Mediterranean Sea. Frequently the bodies are not identified in such cases at all. There is no single database of migrants who have drowned.

Recently, a group of 42 members of the European Parliament addressed an open letter to the Executive Director of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), Mr. Fabrice Leggeri. They sought clarification regarding reports of the use of firearms by Frontex personnel in attempts to intercept vessels in the Aegean Sea used for the illegal transport of migrants to the EU. According to the MEPs, even if arms were used to disable these vessels, for example by aiming fire at the engines, this still poses a danger to the migrants' lives. According to the media, this practice has in fact led on a number of occasions to the death of migrants, including at least one child, and is an excessive measure.

A further disgraceful subject is trafficking in human beings between Nigeria and the EU for the purpose of sexual exploitation. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), more than 80 per cent of the Nigerian women arriving in European countries are forced into prostitution. Despite the efforts of the authorities, the flow of sex slaves from that African country is not only not decreasing, but is also beginning to assume threatening proportions. According to the IOM, whereas 1,500 Nigerian women arrived in the EU in 2014, in 2015 the figure was already 5,633 and around 4,000 women have already been shipped to Europe from Nigeria during the first six months of this year alone.

We should also like to draw attention to the EU's recent migration deal with Afghanistan, which provides for the return there of some 90,000 Afghans who have been refused asylum in the EU. According to the Danish Refugee Council, deported Afghans have been frequently forced to return to their places of permanent residence in dangerous regions. In that connection, 71 per cent of the Afghans arriving in Europe were forced to leave Afghanistan because of hostilities and other violent activities.

We once again call on the EU leadership and its Member States to adhere strictly to their international commitments with respect to migrants and refugees. We confirm the need for the European Commission to invite the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the situation of refugees and migrants in the EU and to draw up corresponding recommendations.

Thank you for your attention.