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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1091st MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 March 2016

**On neo-Nazism in Latvia**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are extremely concerned at the plans to hold a march by veterans of the voluntary Latvian Legion of the Waffen-SS in Riga on 16 March 2016. Unfortunately, this event has already become a tradition in Latvia in spite of the rightful indignation on the part of the general public and human rights organizations. Moreover, it would appear that the Prime Minister of Latvia, Mr. Māris Kučinskis, has not officially forbidden members of his government from taking part.

The relentless efforts to rehabilitate the legionnaires and foster the myth of compulsory membership of the voluntary Latvian Legion of the Waffen-SS give rise to serious concern. This approach is a gross distortion of history, particularly in view of the crimes committed by the Latvian SS members on the territory of Russia, Belarus and Poland and their involvement in the killing of hundreds of thousands of civilians.

We regard the gathering of the SS veterans and their supporters as a cynical insult to the memory of the millions of victims of the Second World War. It would appear that our colleagues' memory has become hazy in many ways, for example regarding the fact that the SS, SD, Gestapo and National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) were recognized as criminal organizations by the Nuremberg Tribunal, a decision that is 70 years old this year. It has been forgotten that the creation of extermination camps like Oświęcim (Auschwitz) and others, which were run in part by the SS, have been designated as a crime against humanity. It should be recalled that of the 18 million people who passed through these camps, over 11 million, including children, were killed by various means.

In connection with the condoning of neo-Nazi marches in Latvia, we also note a dangerous trend whereby unprecedented pressure is put on anti-fascist and human rights organizations and obstacles placed in their way by the authorities.

Thus, in the light of this sad experience, the Anti-Nazi Committee of Latvia made a request at a very early date – 16 November 2015 – to the Duma in Riga to picket the Freedom

Monument on 16 March 2016. Afterwards, the Society for the Support of National Soldiers and the Hawks of the Daugava, who are organizing the neo-Nazi march, submitted an application. In accordance with Latvian legislation, it is forbidden for events by opposing movements to be held at one and the same place, and the first application has priority. The city authorities should thus have refused the application by the nationalists, but this is not what happened.

Moreover, in January this year, the Latvian criminal police all of a sudden instigated criminal proceedings under spurious pretexts against the chairman of the Anti-Nazi Committee of Latvia, Mr. Aleksei Sharipov. We have heard no outraged voices in this matter from the European Union and the United States of America regarding the “shrinking space for civil society”.

This favourable attitude to the glorification of Nazism, which is not incidentally confined to Latvia, gives rise to great concern. We must not forget that the modern system of human rights was the result of the victory over this evil. It is based essentially on the rulings of the Nuremberg Tribunal. It is not acceptable to hide behind concerns about freedom of speech and assembly and to condone ultra-radical movements that extol Nazis and their followers and kindle racial and ethnic hatred. Fortunately, there is an increasing realization in the world of the danger of such views. An illustration of this is the growing number of co-sponsors of the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly every year at the initiative of Russia on combating the glorification of Nazism.

The indulgent attitude to the glorification of Nazis and marches by veterans of the Waffen-SS Legion gives their followers a feeling that they can act with impunity. We have repeatedly pointed out in the OSCE and on other international platforms that condoning neo-Nazis will have tragic consequences. We can see an example of this in one participating State where large numbers of people are tortured, shot and burned by nationalists for their views.

We hope that the Latvian authorities will finally show common sense and forbid the march by war criminals and their supporters.

Thank you for your attention.