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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1176th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 February 2018

On violations of the rights of minorities in the European Union

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like once again to raise the question of violations of the rights of national, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities in the European Union, in particular the situation of immigrants from North and Equatorial Africa and South Asia, migrants recently arrived in the European Union, Roma and to a certain extent also the Russian-speaking population.

According to a report published recently by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights on this subject, these categories of people continue to suffer discrimination in all aspects of their lives. The victims are members of ethnic minorities, migrants and, most worryingly, children. This was reported by 38 per cent of the respondents to the Agency's survey, citing ethnic origin (25 per cent), skin colour (12 per cent) and religion (12 per cent) as the main grounds for discrimination. Moreover, it was being shown with increasing frequency in work situations: while looking for work (29 per cent) and in the workplace (22 per cent). The most vulnerable groups were North Africans (45 per cent of respondents), Roma (41 per cent) and immigrants from the countries of sub-Saharan Africa (39 per cent).

Profiling by the police on ethnic grounds also persists as a problem in the countries of the EU. According to the report, 40 per cent of respondents cited ethnic background as the main reason for being stopped by the police. Almost 30 per cent of migrants from North Africa had encountered hatred and harassment on this basis, which represents a depressing increase over the last ten years.

The authors of the report emphasize that the inability of the authorities to ensure effective protection from discrimination and hate crimes is leading to marginalization and exclusion of minorities and is undermining social integration policies.

These findings are confirmed by the conclusions of experts from the European Centre for Tolerance, who, together with the European Centre for Democracy Development and the Institute for National Policy and Ethnic Relations Study, published a report last year on xenophobia, radicalism and hate crimes in Europe. They state that legislative measures have

been adopted in a number of EU countries restricting the rights of national minorities. This is done frequently on the pretext of “combating ethnically motivated crimes” or “protecting the language and culture of the titular nation”. This results in practice in the elimination of minority languages from the media, the education system, culture, and political and social life. We have spoken of this on several occasions here.

Administrative boundaries are redrawn in favour of the national minority in places where minorities are concentrated. The experts noted that the authorities turn a blind eye to racial motivations in the work of the courts and law enforcement bodies. The police impose excessive penalties and carry out profiling of “suspicious citizens” from minorities on the basis of age, skin colour and ethnic origin. Ingrained prejudices within police ranks significantly increase the risk of vulnerable groups being searched, detained and experiencing physical violence during questioning.

The mass statelessness in a number of EU Member States, which is a disgrace in modern-day Europe, gives rise to serious concern. The members of the European Parliament were compelled to draw attention to this in their resolution of 7 February 2018 on protection and non-discrimination with regard to minorities in the EU Member States, which stressed “that the situation and legal status of non-citizens permanently resident in Member States needs to be addressed.” It is acknowledged that minorities encounter obstacles in ensuring respect for their fundamental rights and become victims with increasing frequency of hate crimes for ethnic reasons. It notes with concern that the EU lacks effective tools to monitor the situation in this regard.

There is also the abiding problem of anti-Semitism, manifestations of which have risen sharply in the EU Member States in recent years. In that connection, I would recall the remarks by Ronald Lauder, President of the World Jewish Congress, who expressed strong criticism of a number of EU Member States during the recent OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism held in Rome on 29 January.

We call on the EU authorities and Member States to attentively monitor the situation on the ground and to adhere strictly to their international human rights commitments, particularly those undertaken within the OSCE. The specialist structures in our Organization, including the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, should provide them with the necessary assistance.

Thank you for your attention.