

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1183rd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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On the Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists

Mr. Chairperson,

We take note of the initiative to establish an informal Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists and should like to make a few comments in this regard.

Freedom of expression and media freedom, including the related issue of ensuring safe working conditions for journalists, are among the issues of concern to absolutely all OSCE participating States. Our Organization has developed a substantial body of commitments in this area. We have established a specialized institution – the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. Freedom of expression and media freedom are regular topics at numerous events organized within the OSCE. They are an item on the agenda at the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, the subject of one of the meetings of the Permanent Council's Human Dimension Committee and often the theme of a whole supplementary meeting too.

In this context, we are not certain that there is a need to establish additional forums in this area. Various unofficial forums are sprouting up at the OSCE with a speed that could be put to better use. Establishing narrow-format communities at the OSCE only further divides and fragments its work. I recall that the founders of the CSCE, in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, recognized the indivisibility of security in Europe. And in the 2010 Astana Commemorative Declaration, the heads of the participating States reiterated their commitment to the concept of comprehensive, co-operative, equal and indivisible security. Attempts to fragment the OSCE run contrary to these principles.

It is not appropriate to place one category of rights above others.

No one is disputing that it is important for journalists to be able to work in safety, but this is far from the only challenge we face with regard to freedom of expression.

Unfortunately, we cannot be confident that the initiators of this Group of Friends have honest intentions. These countries – Lithuania, France and Sweden – and a number of other

participants in the group have themselves grossly violated journalists' rights and have obstructed their professional activity and continue to do so. We have spoken about this on numerous occasions at the OSCE, including at the Permanent Council. Ideally, this group ought to begin by reviewing its own members' compliance with commitments on freedom of the media.

Furthermore, the issue is highly politicized. Let us see if this Group of Friends will manage to avoid fuelling yet further politicization and creating even greater confrontation within our Organization.

Thank you for your attention.