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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1295th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

11 December 2020

On violations by the authorities in Ukraine of obligations under international law with regard to the rights of persons belonging to ethnic communities

Mr. Chairperson,

We cannot ignore the concerns expressed by our Hungarian colleagues regarding the searches carried out by the Ukrainian Security Service on 30 November of Hungarian national community organizations in the Zakarpattia (Transcarpathian) region.

It is immediately evident that such events are in line with the paradigm of building an ethnocratic regime, which took shape after the coup in February 2014 and has been diligently pursued by all subsequent authorities. This process is accompanied by systematic coercive Ukrainization – at a time when 46 per cent or less than half of the country’s population speak Ukrainian – along with pressure on the leaders of national-cultural organizations and the “close attention” by the Ukrainian Security Service to the ways they are deployed and how they function.

Searches of structures in the Hungarian community in Zakarpattia were reportedly conducted as part of an investigation into their possible involvement in separatism and high treason. Similar charges have also been brought against a number of members of ethnic associations in Ukraine over the past few years. A recent example was the arrest in Kherson on 21 August of Tatyana Kuzmich, a Russian literature teacher and head of the “Rusich” Russian National Community non-governmental organization, on the absurd charge of high treason. When she was released from pretrial detention on bail and with a written undertaking not to leave the area, she was attacked in the presence of law enforcement officers by activists from the nationalist organization Samooborona (Self-Defence).

It appears that Ukrainian nationalists often act, if not on command, then seemingly in conjunction with the Ukrainian Security Service. There is simply no other explanation as to why hate speech by nationalists against non-Ukrainian-speaking fellow citizens does not receive the legal treatment it deserves. We might also recall the video by a Right Sector supporter with neo-Nazi salutes and threats of physical violence against Hungarian families in the Transcarpathian town of Berehove. Or the statements made afterwards by the organization’s founder, Dmytro Yarosh, about his readiness, together with “the Ukrainian military and volunteers, the Ukrainian Security Service and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, not

only to stop the Hungarian aggression in Zakarpattia, but also to compel that unfriendly country to make peace". The Ukrainian authorities chose to ignore signs that these statements might be seen as incitements to inter-ethnic hostility.

The Ukrainian law enforcement agencies have been similarly inactive when members of the Russian community and their cultural institutions have been attacked. The most high-profile incidents of this nature include the repeated attacks by national radicals on the Russian Centre for Science and Culture in Kyiv, notably the extreme violence of Right Sector and C14 supporters on 17 February 2018. The Russian Cultural Centre in Lviv has been vandalized countless times and has been effectively compelled to curtail its activities.

The proponents of Ukrainian national exclusivity feel quite at home in modern Ukraine. Their organized movements with a paramilitary structure and the use of neo-Nazi paraphernalia are not questioned by the authorities. The flip side of the coin are the regular accusations against peaceful national-cultural associations, not only in western Ukraine, but across the country – especially if they advocate the protection of linguistic, educational and cultural rights of their members or maintain links with the States where their compatriots live.

The Ukrainian Government's policy towards Russian-speaking citizens and national minorities runs directly counter to its obligations under international law. We have repeatedly drawn the attention of the OSCE Permanent Council and executive structures, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to the massive and systematic nature of discrimination on ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and other grounds in Ukraine.

We call on the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to react in a timely manner to cases of harassment of national minorities and to reflect the results of its observations in its reports. This is fully in line with the Mission's mandate to monitor and support respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. In that context, we urge the SMM to closely follow developments in connection with Tatyana Kuzmich. First-hand information on the situation of other organizations representing Russian-speaking residents in the country is needed.

Once again, we exhort the Ukrainian Government to take a responsible approach to its international obligations. We hope that the participating States, as well as the newly appointed Secretary General Helga Schmid, the High Commissioner on National Minorities Kairat Abdrakhmanov, the ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci and the Representative on Freedom of the Media Teresa Ribeiro will press the Ukrainian authorities to take real steps to rectify this objectionable situation.

Thank you for your attention.