

PC.DEL/410/18

13 April 2018

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1181st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

12 April 2018

**In response to the statement on discrimination against
national minorities in Latvia**

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to say a few words in reply to the distinguished representative of Latvia.

We note with regret that the Latvian authorities are violating not only their international obligations but also their own national legislation.

We have already quoted provisions from the Latvian Constitution today. Article 91 states that “all human beings in Latvia shall be equal before the law and the courts. Human rights shall be realised without discrimination of any kind.” Article 114 states that “persons belonging to ethnic minorities have the right to preserve and develop their language and their ethnic and cultural identity.” But for more than 25 years now, Latvia has been steadily carrying out artificial assimilation of the Russian-speaking minority. We see that this process has now accelerated.

Not only Russia has expressed serious concerns about the Latvian authorities’ actions. We already mentioned the appeal from the Federal Union of European Nationalities, which is now advancing an initiative for the European Union to adopt a legally binding form of obligations to protect the rights of national minorities, including their cultural and linguistic rights. This initiative, which was given the name Minority SafePack Initiative, proposes a whole package of specific measures. Just a few days ago, work ended to collect signatures in its support in EU Member States. More than 1.2 million signatures were collected. It is worth noting that Latvia was one of the countries that collected more than its set quota of signatures. This confirms that national minorities in the country seek external protection for their rights from the EU, if internal mechanisms are failing to protect them.

Another example was the recent joint appeal from a number of public figures and organizations in Germany to the German deputies in the European Parliament. In this appeal they express their concern regarding the Latvian Saeima’s adoption of amendments to the

laws on education and note that they not only violate the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but also the basic principles of democracy that Latvia undertook to uphold when it joined the European Union. The German public figures note that Russians born in Latvia are being subjected to persecution and expressed serious concerns for the future of the European Union, given that people in one of its Member States are being deprived of democratic rights and freedoms on ethnic grounds. I hope that these words will provoke reflection on the need to rectify the situation, not just in Riga but also in Brussels.

Thank you for your attention.