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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1314th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

20 May 2021

On the water blockade of Crimea

Madam Chairperson,

We have just heard a clear example of the hypocrisy of the representative of Ukraine and some participating States. They keep on stating their “extreme concern” at the human rights situation in Russian Crimea and for the well-being of Crimean Tatars there. And yet they carefully avoid the subject of the Ukrainian Government’s water blockade of the peninsula, which has turned into a collective punishment of Crimeans for their free and conscious decision in March 2014 to reunite with Russia. Moreover, it is the Crimean Tatars who are most affected by this inhumane decision of the Ukrainian authorities. This decision was openly supported by the Chairman of the Mejlis, Refat Chubarov.

Here are the facts. The coastal areas of Crimea are coping with declining water resources, while freshwater shortages are particularly acute in the Bakhchysarai and Simferopol districts of the Republic of Crimea, where the Crimean Tatar population is over 20 per cent. The economy of these territories is based on agriculture, which mostly employs Crimean Tatar people. It is the agricultural sector that has been particularly hard hit by the water blockade.

This is the real nature of the “concern” of the Ukrainian Government and its handlers from the European Union and the United States of America for the Crimean Tatars and the people of Crimea in general.

Let me remind you that the human right to water is an indispensable condition for fulfilling the requirements for respect of human dignity. This right is inextricably linked with the observance of other human rights, including the right to life, to hygiene, to food and generally to the maintenance of good health.

As a party to a number of international human rights treaties, Ukraine has voluntarily accepted legal obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights set out in those instruments. This is not to mention its OSCE political commitments.

The Ukrainian Government's targeted imposition of a water blockade on Crimea can thus be qualified as a violation by Ukraine of its human rights obligations, as enshrined in the following international agreements in particular:

- Article 6 (right to life) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- Article 11 (right to adequate food, freedom from hunger, equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need) and Article 12 (right to the highest attainable standard of health) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- Article 6 (child's right to life and health) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Article 1 of this Convention defines torture as "any act by which ... suffering ... is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as ... punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed ... or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind". Article 2 stipulates that "no exceptional circumstances ... may be invoked as a justification of torture."

Moreover, in its General Comment, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights points out the following: "To comply with their international obligations in relation to the right to water, States parties have to respect the enjoyment of the right in other countries. International cooperation requires States parties to refrain from actions that interfere, directly or indirectly, with the enjoyment of the right to water in other countries. Any activities undertaken within the State party's jurisdiction should not deprive another country of the ability to realize the right to water for persons in its jurisdiction."

Ukraine's actions also contravene its obligations under the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and its 1999 Protocol on Water and Health, as well as the 1992 bilateral Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of Ukraine Concerning the Joint Use and Protection of Transboundary Waters.

To conclude, Crimea will continue to develop successfully as part of Russia despite all the "non-recognition" and blockades. Ukraine's criminal policy towards the peninsula's residents, including Crimean Tatars, only confirms that the Crimean people's democratic choice in March 2014 to "return to their native harbour" was correct.

Thank you for your attention.