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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1173rd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

25 January 2018

**In response to the address by the President of the OSCE
Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. George Tsereteli**

Mr. Tsereteli,

We have listened attentively to your statement and would like to share our thoughts on some of the questions raised in it.

Russia has always acknowledged the importance of the Assembly as a unique autonomous OSCE institution and platform for equal and mutually respectful inter-parliamentary dialogue aimed at confronting new challenges and threats, restoring trust and improving co-operation in the Euro-Atlantic region. One of the important tasks of parliamentarians apart from the regulatory activities in their own countries is to assist in safeguarding security and stability in the entire OSCE area. This can be achieved only through a unifying agenda. This is the way to obtain the results you mentioned and which the taxpayers of our countries expect.

We agree with you about the need for the OSCE's potential to be exploited to the full in dealing with these tasks.

We welcome the contribution by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to the work of the OSCE as a whole in combating the threat of terrorism. A significant event in this regard was the creation last year within the Parliamentary Assembly of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism, which includes a member of the Russian delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Nikolay Kovalev. The draft resolution elaborated by it on strengthening the role of the OSCE in countering terrorism received unanimous approval at the Annual Session of the Parliamentary Assembly in Minsk from 5 to 9 July 2017. This once again emphasizes the timeliness and need to continue our joint anti-terrorism efforts. We welcome the plans for Committee members to visit a number of countries in South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia and your planned visit to New York for a series of meetings with representatives of the United Nations, including the Under-Secretary-General and head of the Counter-Terrorism Office, Vladimir Voronkov.

We agree with the need for close attention to be paid to the subject of cybersecurity. In that regard, parliamentarians have a special responsibility to prevent the use of unsubstantiated accusations of computer attacks as a means of exerting political pressure. Instead of this, there is a need to establish a framework for objective and professional discussion by participating States with a view to elaborating general rules for responsible behaviour by States in the infosphere.

In our opinion, the development of trade and economic co-operation is a promising area for inter-parliamentary dialogue. Addressing this task and also promoting the One Belt One Road concept would further progress towards the harmonization of integration processes in Western and Eastern Europe. In particular, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly could play a role in establishing contacts between the Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union.

We support the participation of parliamentarians from OSCE participating States in election observation. As for the Parliamentary Assembly's plans to send observers to the presidential elections in Russia on 18 March this year, we should like to assure you that Russia, as in the past, will provide assistance in organizing a visit of this nature by representatives of the Assembly. At the same time, we consider it important to increase co-operation in the area of election observation between the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). I would remind you that CIS missions are carried out in accordance with an agreed regulatory framework (the 2002 Convention on Standards for Democratic Elections and the 2011 CIS Interparliamentary Assembly Recommendations for CIS Observers). The need has been growing for a long time for a similar regulatory framework for OSCE observation missions, which should operate on the basis of uniform agreed election observation rules and principles.

Mr. Tsereteli,

We have taken note of the part of your statement regarding Ukraine. The settlement of the conflict within Ukraine depends entirely on the implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures. Unfortunately, the draft law on the so-called "reintegration" of Donbas approved by your Ukrainian colleagues in the Verkhovna Rada on 18 January this year undermines these agreements. In that context, we urge the head of the Parliamentary Assembly to make a principled assessment of this document, which is causing an escalation of tension with unpredictable tragic consequences. We also expect the Parliamentary Assembly to state its objective position with regard to the extremist activities of the Ukrainian radical nationalists, which have not received an adequate response from the country's leadership. The discriminatory law on education, which is in gross violation of the OSCE's commitments, also gives rise to serious concern. We look forward to hearing the opinion of the head of the Assembly on this subject as well.

Regarding your appraisal of the work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), we should like to confirm our support of this Mission, which should operate in accordance with the principles of impartiality and objectivity. As to your request for ensuring access by the Mission to Ukrainian territory, including the entire length of the border with Russia, it is regularly visited by the monitors. The SMM needs to co-operate more actively with the local authorities in Donbas, which would substantially increase its effectiveness.

We agree with the need for due attention to be paid to the migration crisis sweeping Europe. A key aspect in this regard is to identify and address the root causes of the mass exodus of people from the Middle East and North Africa.

We wholeheartedly endorse your conclusions regarding the rise of intolerance, racism, xenophobia and aggressive nationalism. This trend is fuelled by efforts in a number of OSCE participating States to glorify the Nazis and their accomplices, falsify the history of the Second World War, and consign the judgements of the Nuremberg Tribunal to oblivion. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has great potential for combating these odious manifestations.

You rightly note the worrying development of the situation regarding freedom of the media. In fact, it is frequently the victim today of narrow political interests and fear of the truth and fair competition. This is why Russian mass media and journalists offering an alternative point of view are being persecuted in some OSCE countries under the supposed pretext of combating propaganda. Where is the reaction by the Parliamentary Assembly to this blatant violation of freedom of speech and of the press?

Mr. Tsereteli,

This year the Assembly will have two traditional major meetings – the Winter Meeting in Vienna on 22 and 23 February, and the Annual Session in Berlin from 7 to 11 July. We trust that the discussion will be constructive without the confrontational rhetoric of politicized documents. In that way the Assembly will confirm its importance as a unifying parliamentary forum. We wish you success in the realization of this task.

Thank you for your attention.