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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1114th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 October 2016

**On the elections to State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian
Federation**

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to inform you of the results of the elections to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on 18 September 2016. A total of 450 deputies were elected to the lower chamber of the Russian parliament: 225 in the federal electoral district and 225 in single-mandate constituencies. The results of the campaign were recognized as objective and legitimate by the overwhelming majority of its participants and observers, and most importantly by the Russian people.

In addition to returning to a mixed majority-proportional electoral system, amendments to the legislation provide for participation in the elections through self-nomination, a reduction in the electoral threshold for the allocation of seats according to the federal lists from 7 per cent to 5 per cent of the vote, and additional protection of the rights of election observers – only a court ruling can have them removed from polling stations.

According to the Central Election Commission (CEC) of the Russian Federation, it was the “largest-scale and most difficult campaign in the entire history of elections in modern-day Russia”. On a single day of voting, 18 September, in addition to the election of deputies to the State Duma, there were also elections of governors in seven regions and of deputies to 39 regional parliaments. Some 95,000 polling stations were in operation. The number of political parties doubled (from 7 to 14) compared to 2011. With a view to ensuring maximum openness of the voting procedure and vote count, technical equipment was used on election day. Electronic voting machines were employed at 711 polling stations, while ballot paper processing systems were used at 5,748 polling stations. Closed-circuit television (CCTV) monitoring and webcasting on public networks were an important step towards increasing the transparency of the electoral process. Around 16,900 CCTV monitoring units were installed at polling stations in 15 constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

According to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) observation mission (with 217 accredited observers, and long-term monitoring carried out by 40 observers), the elections were held in accordance with the law; the CEC and lower-level election commissions ensured that the citizens of the country were able to exercise their right to freely express their will; the elections were in line with the principles for conducting democratic elections, and were open and competitive.

On voting day, observers from the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation monitored the elections at 93 polling stations and noted the “high level of organization of the preparation by the Russian Central Election Commission for such a large-scale election, and also the professionalism of the members of the lower-level election commissions”.

There was constructive co-operation on the part of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly with the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation throughout the election observation mission’s work. The ODIHR noted that the current “legal framework provides an adequate basis for the conduct of elections” in present-day Russia. This once again confirms that all citizens of Russia, regardless of where they live, had an opportunity to exercise their right to vote within a legal framework.

We have also taken note of the ODIHR mission’s criticisms. Its findings and recommendations – at least, those concerning the electoral process – will be duly examined. Overall, everything was done to ensure that any concerns that arose among the observers – not only from the ODIHR, but also other international and Russian observers – were verified and taken into account as appropriate. We can say with certainty that there were far fewer irregularities than in the previous campaign, and that they did not have an impact on the nature of the campaign overall or on the validity of the elections. All of the irregularities identified by the competent authorities will be verified and analysed by experts. The CEC Chairperson Ella Pamfilova gave an assurance that no complaint would go unexamined.

I should like to mention in particular the role of observers, primarily those from Russia, but also international observers. All in all, some 420,000 observers were working at the country’s polling stations on election day. Their work made a substantial contribution to increasing the transparency of the electoral procedures.

At the same time, the ODIHR mission’s work in Russia, including the financial aspects, once again confirmed how extremely important it is to improve the OSCE’s election observation methodology and to develop uniform modalities agreed upon by all participating States for professional and depoliticized election monitoring.

The only place on the planet where the holding of elections to the State Duma encountered manifest problems was on the territory of Ukraine. The campaign to intimidate Russian voters was on an unprecedented scale there. We might recall that when elections were held in Ukraine in 2014, regardless of what we thought about them, everything necessary was done in Russia so that the elections could proceed smoothly at the Ukrainian diplomatic missions without any security problems.

Nevertheless, despite the difficult situation, 158 people were able to exercise their constitutional right at the Russian diplomatic mission in Kyiv, 120 in Odessa, 56 in Kharkiv, and 38 in Lviv.

As for the elections in Crimea, regardless of the criticism from a number of countries, the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol exercised their right and voted for their representatives to the Russian authorities. The turnout was approximately the same as in the rest of the country.

We regard the statements about the non-recognition of the vote of Russian citizens living on the territory of the Republic of South Ossetia and the Republic of Abkhazia as no less absurd.

The fact that some colleagues find it necessary to support attacks on one of the pillars of genuine democracy – the expression of the will of the people – for political reasons is most disturbing.

Thank you for your attention.