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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1344th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 November 2021

On the situation at the border with the European Union

Madam Chairperson,

Clichéd politicized statements at the Permanent Council containing unfounded accusations against the Republic of Belarus have unfortunately become standard practice among our Western colleagues. These assertions have nothing in common with genuine solicitude for the application of universal norms in the field of human rights. Such actions undermine trust towards the OSCE; they are also detrimental to the human dimension.

We strongly condemn any attempts to directly or indirectly interfere in the internal political processes in Belarus, which is already subject to smear campaigns as it is.

We regard the West's unilateral sanctions against sovereign States as unacceptable and illegitimate from the point of view of international law; they are introduced to exert pressure on "unwelcome" governments. Economic sanctions, in our view, may be used only as an intervention in extreme cases and exclusively upon a decision by the United Nations Security Council for the purpose of countering threats to international peace and security. In contrast, the actions that are being taken against the sovereign Republic of Belarus are merely aggravating the situation, especially in the context of a pandemic.

As for the issue that has been raised, namely the migration crisis, we would emphasize that the migrants who are on the border with Poland and Lithuania want to reach Western Europe. They have no intention of remaining in Belarus. The Belarusian Government is effectively being threatened with sanctions because the EU countries do not want to take in refugees. This is a case of passing the buck.

It is essential to avoid double standards. In what way does the approach to this issue in Italy – where legal proceedings have been instituted against the former Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini, who is accused of illegally detaining refugees in the summer of 2019 – differ from the current position of Poland and Lithuania, which are driving out refugees into Belarus who wish to enter their territory?

When refugees were heading for the European Union from Turkey, the EU authorities allocated funds to ensure that they remained on the territory of the Republic of Turkey. It is our understanding that no one intends to help the Belarusians in this matter.

How is one to square the actions of a number of Member States of the European Union, which constantly proclaims here its commitment to human rights and humanitarian principles, with the reality on the ground? Respect for international law implies also respecting the interests of people who have become refugees not of their own volition but through the fault of, above all, a number of Western countries that have destabilized the situation in the Middle East and North Africa.

The migration crisis on Belarus's border with Lithuania and Poland must be resolved on the basis of international law and without using pressure, not to mention violence, against refugees – in particular, without shooting and without firing tear gas at children. The Polish and Lithuanian authorities are concentrating troops and security forces on the border. For what purpose? Will you start shooting at refugees?

The physical state and the morale of the people on the border are appalling. There are no basic hygiene conditions on the territory of the temporary "camp". The situation is exacerbated by the fact that among the refugees are many women and children who are forced to sleep on the ground in temperatures close to zero. The media today were awash with news of the death of a child from hypothermia: it was a 14-year-old boy from Iraqi Kurdistan.

We urge that all speculation be abandoned and that close attention be paid to cases in which EU countries have flagrantly violated the human rights of people in this vulnerable category.

Thank you for your attention.