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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1196th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 October 2018

**In response to the report by the Director of the Office for Democratic
Institutions and Human Rights, Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir**

Mr. Chairperson,
Madam Director,

We listened attentively to your report on the main results of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw. We had an unprecedented situation this year, as the event took place with a disputed status and without an approved agenda. This was a violation of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE and other basic documents, but the Italian Chairmanship and the senior officials of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) decided nevertheless to go ahead with this despite the clear negative consequences. The boycott of the Warsaw meeting by a number of participating States for the third year in a row also sent a worrying signal to the entire OSCE.

There is no question that this state of affairs will have an impact on the forthcoming discussions of the OSCE budget for 2019. We hope that the ODIHR will learn from what has happened and will, in co-ordination with the incoming Slovak Chairmanship next year, show due respect for the principle of consensus, which is a fundamental principle of our Organization.

Let me say a few words about what stood out at the meeting in Warsaw. Unlike in past years, the working sessions have begun to look more like discussions rather than like the lectures that we had seen in earlier years. States had more time to discuss the issues.

At the same time, the events were still politicized and confrontational in nature, and some delegations were intent not on resolving the problems facing the OSCE, but on increasing division. We saw repeated attempts to muzzle undesirable voices trying to give other points of view. Steps were even taken against some civil society representatives for the sole reason that they came from a particular region. What has happened to freedom of expression?

The key challenges facing the OSCE today include glorification of Nazism, attempts to falsify the Second World War, and problems with radical nationalism. These trends are particularly visible in Ukraine, and also in Latvia and Estonia, where the authorities turn a blind eye to neo-Nazism.

The canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church is facing unprecedented persecution. Clergy and parishioners face constant violence, hatred and attempts to seize their churches.

The OSCE needs to step up its efforts to prevent anti-Semitism, anti-Christian sentiment and Islamophobia. Such action must be comprehensive. The Ministerial Council decision adopted in Basel in 2014 should serve as a reference for adopting separate declarations on combating intolerance and discrimination against Christians and Muslims.

Persecution of the media also continues. We see persecution of journalists and discrimination of the language and education rights of national minorities and communities, especially the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine.

We see a serious deterioration in the situation with freedom of movement and freedom of expression in the OSCE area. The insistence by the United States of America, the European Union countries and a number of other States on collectively punishing the people of Crimea for exercising their democratic freedoms is discriminatory and contradicts OSCE commitments.

Other challenges also remain very relevant today – issues such as unlawful migration, trafficking in human beings and violation of children's rights.

The time has long since come for serious reform of the ODIHR's work. We hope to see a greater focus from the ODIHR on the issues of genuine importance such as those mentioned above. There is also a need to elaborate a common methodology on the basic principles of election observation, approved by all OSCE participating States. Russia remains always ready for constructive co-operation with the ODIHR and the other OSCE executive structures in carrying out their mandates.

Thank you for your attention.