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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1244th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 October 2019

**On the report by the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Madam Director,

We thank you for your comprehensive report on the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM). It is important that the decisions necessary for holding this meeting were adopted in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE.

We note some positive changes in the organization of the plenary sessions, including the opening plenary, which is now no longer a “talk show” involving invited experts. As a result, there was more time for statements by delegations and non-governmental organizations.

However, we are forced to note the persistence of major confrontation and politicization at the event. Freedom of speech was severely tested. It was worth expressing an alternative opinion, as we immediately observed attempts to stifle the contradictor and banish them from the room. There were clear abuses of points of order, which should relate to strictly procedural issues and not turn into rights of reply. Steps were taken against some civil society delegates only because they came from a particular region. On a related note, we expect the leadership of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Harlem Désir, to respond adequately to the decision of the Ukrainian authorities to initiate criminal proceedings against public activists and journalists from Crimea for their participation in the HDIM. We consider reprisals against NGOs to be unacceptable.

It is therefore important for the ODIHR not to allow the introduction of geographical censorship into the OSCE. In the same vein, it is necessary to consider improving the system for registering participants, which should not create obstacles for civil society.

At the same time, the HDIM cannot be turned into a gathering of aggressive opposition forces, extremists and terrorists who threaten the delegates from national governments.

The report notes that, regarding hate crimes, “there are unfortunately still serious challenges regarding implementation of OSCE commitments by the participating States”. Against this backdrop, the

executive structures need to pay greater attention to the rise in manifestations of aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism. The problem is acute, it is no longer enough to consider it only as part of “hate crimes”. For example, in Ukraine, national radicals continue to commit atrocities, in the Baltic countries, the glorification of former Nazi accomplices has become commonplace. Alarming trends are also observed in a number of other States.

The comments in the report on the changing nature of assemblies, and also on the increase in the number of challenges faced by States when ensuring the right to freedom of assembly, are interesting.

The topic of combating anti-Semitism and intolerance and discrimination against Christians and Muslims remains relevant. We share your assertion, Madam Director, about the need to invest efforts in the follow-up to the 2014 Basel Ministerial Council Declaration.

Regarding the proposal for a draft decision on the prevention of torture, we should like to recall that it was not possible to adopt this decision earlier as some countries were unwilling to reflect a number of acute problems and eradicate evil practices. Without this, it is not possible to effectively prevent torture.

When promoting gender equality, it is necessary to maintain a balance, not to focus only on security issues and civil and political rights. It is important that States provide women whose goal is full-time employment and career growth with the necessary conditions to combine family and professional life.

The Office should focus on such topics as the rights of the child, freedom of movement, access to information, the shameful phenomenon of mass statelessness, violations of language and educational rights, and also the generally worsening human rights situation in the European Union and North America. The ODIHR needs to pay close attention to the situation in Ukraine, where gross violations of all categories of human rights occur.

Madam Director,

Your report notes the increased challenges when it comes to elections in the OSCE area. In this context, the development of uniform modalities for electoral monitoring agreed upon by all OSCE participating States is becoming increasingly relevant, notably by taking into account new challenges in the electoral field. These include Ukraine’s direct violation of its electoral obligations. I am referring to the refusal to grant accreditation to Russian citizens as part of election observation missions, the deprivation of the voting rights of millions of Ukrainians because of the decision not to open polling stations in Russia, and the exclusion of residents of Donbas and internally displaced persons in Ukraine from the political process. The ODIHR’s inability to rectify the situation is further evidence that the current methodology is by no means a “gold standard”.

Nevertheless, there is a separate positive development in this regard. For example, the issue of out-of-country voting is addressed in the latest reports of the monitoring missions.

In conclusion, we should like to reaffirm Russia’s readiness to continue constructive co-operation with the ODIHR. We wish you, Ms. Gísladóttir, and all the staff of the Office success in your work.

Thank you for your attention.