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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1104th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

9 June 2016

**On the violation of the human rights of migrants in the
United States of America**

Mr. Chairperson,

Many human rights advocates believe that America is returning to the worst times in the crackdown on immigration. According to *The Economist*, the number of deportations is currently nine times higher than it was 20 years ago. Most decisions are taken by the courts without the defendants being present: either they do not receive the court summons or it is simply not sent to them. Cases are fast-tracked and the defendants are not granted access to a lawyer. For example, according to the American Civil Liberties Union, in recent years up to 80 per cent of the people deported from the United States of America did not attend a hearing and were unable to fully exercise their rights. Things were not any easier for those who had such an opportunity. According to Human Rights Watch, “Thousands of children in deportation hearings in the US must stand alone before government lawyers and judges, and try to make their case without a lawyer. These hearings are incredibly complex and the consequence of losing is the potentially deadly threat of deportation.”

Meanwhile, the United States authorities are systematically stepping up deportations. According to statistics, more than 2.5 million people have been deported from the United States since 2009, a 23 per cent increase compared with the George W. Bush administration. In late 2015, the White House announced its intention to increase the number of deportation raids. They decided to focus on those who had entered the country since 2014 and had not had time to integrate into American society and develop contacts. The majority of these immigrants are minors and women who had fled Central America to escape violence, poverty and disasters. The fact that many of them have relatives in the United States was of no importance to the American authorities. For example, during one operation in January 2016 alone, 121 people were arrested. According to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, between July 2014 and December 2015, deportation orders were issued by immigration courts to 18,607 women with children. In 16,000 cases (86 per cent), the women lacked any legal representation. I emphasize that these figures are based on court records submitted to the Executive Office for Immigration Review of the United States Department of Justice.

The newspapers are full of tragic stories about the brutal arrest of children at schools before their mothers' and fathers' very eyes. According to journalists, this fate has befallen several hundred minors since the start of this year. However, the flow of illegal child immigration is growing. More than 68,000 children entered the United States in 2014, by the end of 2015 these figures had increased again. In that connection, as Human Rights Watch has said, the agreement between the United States Government and Mexico to strengthen the border has simply resulted in citizens of third countries being deported to dangerous regions in Mexico without any possibility of defending their rights there or at home. This was also confirmed in a recent report by Amnesty International.

The programme to resettle children from Central America whose parents are already legally in the United States is extremely limited, ineffective and even dangerous. While the American authorities drag out the consideration of applications, children are forced to remain where they are at risk of violence. A total of 32 children out of 6,000 applicants have been accepted under this programme in the past 18 months.

In that connection, the United States Department of Health and Human Services has in effect handed some of the tens of thousands of illegal immigrant minors over to human traffickers, as can be seen from the US Senate investigation and information from the non-governmental organization Judicial Watch. Essentially, as the Ohio Senator Rob Portman said, modern-day slavery has occurred in the United States right in its own backyard.

A report published in February 2016 by a number of human rights organizations points to gross violations of the fundamental rights of migrants by the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Investigations into 56 deaths at temporary detention facilities have shown negligence on the part of staff, a failure to observe basic medical standards and an unwillingness to duly recognize and correct fatal errors. For example, staff at these centres have often taken their time in calling the emergency services and dragged out the processing of documents to send people to hospital, which has resulted in the death of migrants.

The detention conditions for migrants in the United States have become a cause of considerable concern to human rights advocates from Grassroots Leadership. For example, early this year, around 30 women migrants at a temporary detention centre in Texas went on hunger strike. Their letters published by the aforementioned organization describe flagrant violations, detention for up to 18 months, poor-quality food and a lack of safety. Experts have testified that women migrants, including those with young children, were not provided with appropriate medical care. And this is in spite of the physical and emotional suffering which they have had to endure on the path to what would they thought would be a better life.

We call on the United States authorities to observe the human rights of migrants, especially children, to ensure they have all the necessary legal guarantees in the process of deciding their fate, not to allow violence and degrading treatment, to grant them access to medical care, and to help maintain rather than destroy family ties.

Perhaps, the United States Government, which is such an advocate of the "good offices" of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in other States, should set an example and invite the Office to assess the situation of migrants in the United States and draw up recommendations to rectify the situation as a matter of urgency.

Thank you for your attention.