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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1108th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 July 2016

On police brutality in the United States of America

Mr. Chairperson,

First of all, we should like to express our condolences to the families and friends of the police officers shot last week in Dallas while carrying out their duties. We strongly condemn their murder.

As is often the case with crimes of this type, the victims were innocent people, suffering merely because they belonged to a certain class or social group. Thus, the murder of both the police officers and black citizens was the latest cruel reminder of the growing antagonism in the United States of America between police and society. We have repeatedly raised the question of police brutality in the USA in the Permanent Council, but evidently its roots are too deep for it to be resolved quickly.

And now we are observing another wave of violence. In the early hours of 5 July in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, two police officers pulled the unarmed African American Alton Sterling to the ground and shot him at point-blank range after having restrained him by electric shock. Two days later on 7 July in Falcon Heights, Minnesota, police officers shot another African American, Philando Castile, after having stopped his vehicle on account of a broken tail light. His girlfriend, who was with him in the vehicle, filmed what was happening and effectively streamed the murder on the Internet. Moreover, some reports claim that there was a child in the vehicle at the time of the shooting.

The murder of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile once again gave rise in a number of US cities to massive protests against the arbitrary police action and the unpunished murder of black citizens. African American and human rights non governmental organizations – the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Human Rights Watch, Human Rights Campaign, Black Lives Matter and others – described the latest outbursts of violence as yet another manifestation of groundless police brutality and racial discrimination. They inevitably suggest parallels with events in 2014 and 2015 in Ferguson, New York and Baltimore, which were also provoked by the murder of African Americans.

I should like to present some statistics. According to *The Washington Post*, Philando Castile was the 123rd African American to be killed by the police in 2016. What is more, while around 1,000 US citizens were killed by the police in 2015 (965 persons as at 24 December 2015), more than 500 had already been killed in the first half of this year.

These figures are indicative of mass and systematic brutality by the police, who put their personal safety above the safety of citizens. Assessments of the real threat are made in an extremely arbitrary manner, allowing the police to avoid responsibility for their actions. This is also clear from the results of investigations into police shootings: only 1 per cent of cases are deemed to be criminal actions by members of the law enforcement authorities. This information also comes from *The Washington Post*.

It should be noted that peaceful protests against unlawful acts by the police are suppressed by the same police. For example, Associated Press reports that over 160 people were arrested alone during the recent protests in Baton Rouge in connection with the killing of Alton Sterling. Similar protests and repressions have taken place in other US cities. We will not tire our colleagues with this recitation but would merely like to draw attention to the fact that when protests take place anywhere in the USA itself, the issue of the absolute right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly immediately goes by the wayside. We recall the large-scale arrest of demonstrators in Washington in April this year. Over 1,200 people there were taken into police custody during a peaceful demonstration in support of democracy and fair elections. Meanwhile, similar events in OSCE participating States that are not allies of the USA are treated quite differently by our US colleagues, even in cases of overt violence on the part of the demonstrators.

Mr. Chairperson,

The succession of tragic events in the USA is a manifestation of systematic, gross and large-scale violations of human rights. On more than one occasion in the past, also in the OSCE, we have heard assurances by US representatives that measures will be taken to prevent such situations. Unfortunately, the violence has not stopped.

We insistently urge the US authorities finally to set about eliminating the underlying causes of social tension in the country, to deal with the race problems, to adhere strictly to international standards and OSCE commitments, including those regarding police activities, and to observe their obligations to safeguard freedom of assembly, expression and the media. In particular, the US Government could invite the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to conduct an analysis of the situation and elaborate corresponding recommendations.

Thank you for your attention.