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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1219th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 March 2019

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

Mr. Chairperson,
Madam Director,

I should first of all like to congratulate you, Madam Director, and all our esteemed female colleagues on International Women's Day, which is to be celebrated tomorrow (8 March).

We have read with interest the detailed annual report for 2018 of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Let us begin by considering the ODIHR's main task, namely election observation. We are grateful to you for your principled stance in organizing the monitoring of the presidential election due to take place in Ukraine on 31 March. Already at this stage, as we have seen, we are confronted with serious violations. International observers who form part of the ODIHR election observation mission (EOM) team are being prevented from fulfilling their role, specifically by being denied accreditation on the basis of their nationality. The country's very own voters are subjected to brazen discrimination by not being allowed to vote at the Ukrainian embassy and consulates on Russian territory – something that affects millions of Ukrainian citizens. In view of this, it is puzzling that the report makes no mention of the important review of arrangements for voting at embassies abroad contained in document ODIHR.GAL/63/18 of 22 October 2018.

Unfortunately, as in previous years, the ODIHR's work in the electoral sphere continues to suffer from imbalances in the geographical distribution and scope of its missions. With rare exceptions, its monitoring of the electoral process in European Union countries is carried out in a truncated manner. As recent examples we may cite the observation of elections in Estonia, Slovakia and Finland.

This raises the legitimate question of how such an approach is meant to tally with the Office's mandate – in particular, with Decision No. 19/06 adopted by the Ministerial Council in Brussels in 2006, which calls upon the ODIHR to “ensure as wide as possible geographical coverage in [its] election activities”.

It is evident that the Office's work needs to be reorganized to ensure respect for the principles of independence, impartiality and professionalism. We expect you to take effective steps towards resolving the problems that have built up.

Moreover, the OSCE commitments in the electoral sphere have not changed significantly since the Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE (1990). All this confirms how updating these commitments to take into account present-day realities and new challenges is a long overdue task.

A no less important sphere of the ODIHR's work is the defence of human rights and freedoms. We welcome the increasing attention paid by the Office to issues of anti-Semitism and intolerance towards Christians and Muslims. The high relevance of these challenges means that it is important to fulfil the task mandated by the OSCE Ministerial Council in Basel in 2014 with regard to the preparation of separate Ministerial Council Declarations on combating Christianophobia and Islamophobia. In your report, it is stated that: "Too often, what begins with discrimination and intolerant discourse can escalate into violence and wider scale conflict." In this connection, we should like to draw your attention once again to the persecution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Ukraine. We urge you, as well as the OSCE Chairmanship and other OSCE specialist bodies, to give a principled assessment of the Ukrainian Government's discriminatory actions. This also refers to the wide range of other gross and massive violations of human rights perpetrated, as is well known, by the Ukrainian authorities.

In the report there is not a single word about neo-Nazism either. It seems incredible that the Office should be deliberately ignoring a threat that is growing in the OSCE area, and which merits the ODIHR's particular attention.

We also urge the Office's management and the High Commissioner on National Minorities to respond quickly and effectively to all violations of the linguistic and educational rights of ethnic communities.

A further "layer" of complexity is added by the migration crisis in the European Union, which includes violations of the human rights of migrants in the recipient countries and growing xenophobia.

Nor should one forget about the need for further work on such topics as traditional values, the inviolability of private life, combating the phenomenon of mass statelessness, freedom of movement and human contacts, the rights of persons with disabilities, and the fight against discrimination in sport.

On the whole, as we have emphasized repeatedly, enhancing the entire human dimension of the OSCE is a long overdue task. Together with other like-minded countries, Russia has submitted relevant proposals on a number of occasions. The whole set of human dimension events for the entire year should be agreed on well in advance. It is unacceptable to conduct OSCE meetings that, whilst conforming to the letter of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE, have no approved agenda.

Last but not least: the OSCE continues to reflect on civil society's participation in its work. The ODIHR organizes a considerable number of tailored events for national

non-governmental organizations. An extensive list of these meetings is included as an annex to the ODIHR's annual report. Among those invited to attend there quite often crop up various shadowy groups and individuals. The criteria according to which they came to be selected as participants raise serious questions.

By way of conclusion, we wish you, Ms. Gísladóttir, and also all the ODIHR staff, success in your work.

Thank you for your attention.