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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1092nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

10 March 2016

**In response to the report by the
OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović**

Mr. Chairperson,
Ms. Mijatović, dear Dunja,

Thank you for your as always interesting statement.

We see your efforts to promote freedom of expression and the protection of the rights of journalists in the OSCE region. We don't always agree with your assessments and conclusions, but we note your prompt reaction to the multifaceted modern-day challenges to freedom of expression and the media. On a personal level, I can say that you are a frank and sincere person, and this deserves respect.

We have taken note of the publication of the brochure "Two Countries – One Profession", the result of lengthy dialogue between Russian and Ukrainian journalists brought together under your auspices. It is to be hoped that the publication of this material will play a role in improving the information climate and the quality of journalism and in raising the professional standards of media workers. We will be interested to see how the journalistic community itself responds to this publication. We believe that this experience should be expanded to other countries so as to bring journalist associations and media groups closer together with a view to fostering mutual understanding and co-operation.

The situation with regard to freedom of expression and the media in the OSCE region today is actually far from simple. Attempts are still being made by a number of States to divide the media scene in fundamental violation of the basic principles of the Helsinki Final Act. Some countries will do anything – from deliberate disinformation to bellicose rhetoric. Restrictive measures imposed on the media on account of the State they belong to and pressure on journalists for political reasons have become firmly established in spite of the fact that they are in violation of international standards, not to mention the spirit and letter of our Organization.

The fight against phenomena such as information wars and propaganda for war and hatred is turning into a farce, while the prosecution of ideological dissidents under the pretext of protecting “national security” has become an established political tactic. The latest flagrant example of this attitude is the deportation from Lithuania of a group of Russian correspondents from the All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company (VGTRK) who had come to cover the Free Russia Forum. Freedom of expression is becoming a vague term and the use of equivocal language is causing complete disorientation, also in terms of values.

Political will is called for to find an answer together to these challenges. Unfortunately, we fail to see this will among some of our colleagues. It would appear that the continuance of a high level of confrontation serves their interests.

We are perturbed by the fact that Russian journalists and media outlets continue to experience direct pressure in a number of OSCE countries through the obstacles put in their way and restrictions on their professional activity. Moreover, time and again we have witnessed the unparalleled pressure put on journalists and media outlets expressing support for Russia’s policies or simply stating a point of view differing from the official position of these countries. Labels are hung on them and they frequently undergo genuine harassment through the media. Why do the familiar advocates of plurality of opinion fail to raise their voices in this situation? Or will everything in the media scene that displeases our Western colleagues now be called “Russian propaganda”? This simplistic approach is hardly conducive to safeguarding security on our continent.

We trust that your important contribution and experience, Ms. Mijatović, will help to rectify this situation.

In conclusion, we should like to wish you good cheer and continued success. For our part, we are willing to continue to co-operate constructively with your Office on all kinds of problems.

Thank you for your attention.