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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1095th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 April 2016

On plans to demolish monuments in Poland

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to draw your attention to the extremely alarming trend in one OSCE country towards destroying its common historical heritage. The President of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, Łukasz Kamiński, announced on 30 March 2016 that in the near future Poland planned to demolish over 500 Soviet memorial sites dedicated to the period of the Second World War.

We have already raised the issue here of the unacceptable desecration in Poland of monuments and graves to the Red Army soldiers who liberated the country from the Nazis. Unfortunately, acts of vandalism have continued to be committed in their dozens, with the Polish authorities effectively failing to intervene and never showing much appetite to search for those responsible for this effrontery. As early as September 2015, demolition commenced of a monument to Army General Ivan Chernyakhovsky, which had stood in the town of his death, Pieniężno. Recently the monument to the liberator of Poland, which had incidentally been erected from funds donated by Poles themselves, was destroyed once and for all.

At this point in time, by dint of the efforts of the Institute of National Remembrance, the Polish Government has elevated the campaign against monuments to the State level. One cannot help but draw parallels with the actions of the Ukrainian authorities, obliterating everything connected to Ukraine's history as part of the USSR, all in the name of "decommunization".

These kinds of intentions are evidence that the Polish Government refuses to take into account our numerous appeals for it to show prudence, a civilized attitude and ordinary human decency and to end a "war on monuments" in which it is bent on effacing from the Polish collective memory the fact that the Red Army saved the country from total destruction at the hands of Hitler's Nazis. It transpires that the authorities are intent on also consigning to oblivion the exploits even of the Poles who fought shoulder to shoulder with Soviet soldiers, given that monuments honouring the Red Army are often also dedicated to Polish military personnel.

They claim that the process will affect memorials that stand alone but not monuments erected on burial sites. These assertions smack of utter cynicism. In both cases, it is about immortalizing the exploits of one and the same people who spilled their blood so that Poles could survive the war and the Polish State could continue to exist.

Detractors of the monuments would do well to remember that their actions directly violate the Treaty between the Republic of Poland and the Russian Federation on Good-Neighbourliness, Friendly Relations and Cooperation of 22 May 1992, and the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Russian Federation on Burial Sites and Memorials to Victims of War and Repression of 22 February 1994.

This is also at variance with the commitments made by the Polish Government within the OSCE, especially, with the 1991 Document of the Cracow Symposium on the Cultural Heritage of the CSCE Participating States. This specifically emphasizes the need to maintain monuments which bear testimony to the tragic events of a shared past, and also to the architectural works of the twentieth century. It is deplorable that this document, adopted in an old Polish city, is now subject to gross violations by Poland itself.

We hope that the Polish authorities will not pander to extremist politicians by taking measures bordering on barbarism.

Thank you for your attention.