

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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AT THE 1147th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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On the problem of statelessness in Europe

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to draw attention to one of the most serious problems persisting within the OSCE area, the phenomenon of statelessness.

The European Network on Statelessness recently published a report entitled “Protecting Stateless Persons from Arbitrary Detention” on its website www.statelessness.eu, based on investigations in a number of European countries (Bulgaria, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom, and also Ukraine). The main focus was a study of the practice of detaining stateless persons, particularly migrants and asylum seekers.

The report states that with the increasing use in Europe of administrative detention of migrants and the growing criminalization of illegal migration, stateless persons or those at risk of statelessness find themselves in a particularly vulnerable position. And yet, many States, including members of the European Union, are in no hurry to recognize this fact, and neither the States themselves nor the European institutions pay sufficient attention to safeguarding the right of abode of stateless migrants. The authors of the report call on the countries of Europe to fundamentally review their policies with a view to finding alternatives to detention for dealing with stateless migrants, offering them a defined legal status and fostering their integration in the host society.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are 715,000 stateless persons in the OSCE area. In the Netherlands alone, where according to official data around 5,000 stateless persons live, there are over 80,000 persons of unidentified citizenship. In Ukraine, various estimates put the number of persons who are stateless or with unverified citizenship at between 5,000 and 50,000.

Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, describes administrative detention as a measure that has a severe and lasting impact on the mental health of migrants, particularly stateless persons. In his opinion, the key to resolving the issue

of safeguarding the rights of stateless migrants and of protecting them from administrative detention is to do away with the phenomenon of statelessness.

The problem of mass statelessness in Latvia and Estonia, where it is a widespread phenomenon anchored in the law, is a separate issue. We have repeatedly raised this question in our statements. The policies of the governments in Riga and Tallinn aim at depriving “non-citizens” of their fundamental political and other socio-economic rights and restricting the use of minority languages. Mass statelessness is thus at the root of violations of the rights of national minorities in these countries. Meanwhile, the authorities in Latvia and Estonia still fail to react to the multiple appeals by respected international bodies to do something about the issue of statelessness.

Unfortunately, the EU leadership shows little concern about the disgraceful phenomenon in modern Europe of so-called “non-citizens”. At the same time, OSCE commitments unambiguously state that “everyone has the right to a nationality and that no one should be deprived of his/her nationality arbitrarily” (Helsinki Document 1992).

We call on our colleagues to pay serious attention to the commitments undertaken by them and to take effective measures to reduce statelessness.

Thank you for your attention.