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**STATEMENT BY MR. DMITRY BALAKIN,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1162nd MEETING OF THE OSCE
PERMANENT COUNCIL**

2 November 2017

On the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists

Mr. Chairperson,

Today, on 2 November, we mark the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. We strongly condemn killings, attacks, ill-treatment and other crimes against media professionals in the OSCE area.

Unfortunately, these kinds of problems exist throughout the OSCE area, including Russia. As you know, on 23 October, Tatyana Felgenhauer, deputy editor-in-chief and anchor of the Echo of Moscow radio station, was assaulted. Although we are most likely talking about the aggressive actions of a person with mental health issues, this incident is nevertheless outrageous and unacceptable. Law enforcement agencies quickly detained, and then remanded the journalist's attacker. Criminal proceedings were opened. The Russian authorities and the country's professional media community expressed their support for Ms. Felgenhauer and closely followed the investigation. The competent authorities are working in close co-operation with the Echo of Moscow radio station.

Safe working conditions for journalists is one of Russia's priorities in the context of ensuring the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the media. Reporters should not be attacked, threatened or subjected to violence for their professional activities. We consistently uphold and support this position at all international forums, including the OSCE.

Violence against journalists in armed conflicts is unacceptable. We must not forget that they inform society about the events while finding themselves in difficult politico-military situations, and often risk their lives.

In that regard, the lack of progress in investigating the killings in Ukraine of journalists Anatoly Klyan, Anton Voloshin, Igor Kornelyuk, Andrey Stenin, Andrea Rocchelli, Oles Buzina, Sergey Dolgov, Vyacheslav Veremiy, Pavel Sheremet and others is of extreme concern. Not only the Ukrainian Government but also its supporters in the European Union and the United States of America turn a blind eye to these crimes. Human rights violations are actively tolerated in political interests, not to mention the

unpunished activities of the infamous website Mirotvorets, which directly threatens the lives of journalists by placing their names on a blacklist.

In addition to attacks, journalists also face other challenges. For example, strict censorship has been introduced in Ukraine, and restrictive measures against the media have become systemic. Far-fetched accusations of “separatism” are used to force reporters to remain silent. The practice of drafting sanctions lists for journalists remains, as well as a discriminatory law prohibiting the publication of literature in the languages of neighbouring countries and the translation of 75 per cent of audiovisual broadcasting into the Ukrainian language. This infringes on the rights and interests of Russian-speaking residents of Ukraine to use and receive information in their native language.

The obstruction of the activities of Russian media has become part of policy in a number of other States in the OSCE area. We have repeatedly raised these issues in the Permanent Council.

The most recent examples include the refusal by Estonia, which holds the Presidency of the European Union, to accredit the Rossiya Segodnya news agency at an informal meeting of EU foreign ministers (August 2017); the expulsion of a journalist of the Sputnik news agency from a press conference following the meeting between French President Macron and Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi (October 2017); the refusal to allow a correspondent of the same agency, Gaëlle Nicol, admission to a press conference at the Élysée Palace; pressure on the Russia Today television channel and the Sputnik news agency in the United States; and the refusal of Twitter to publish advertisements of these media outlets.

Unfortunately, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, does not give a detailed public assessment of all of these incidents. We do not believe that a statement on social media is a sufficient response to serious incidents. We hope that he will react more vigorously to such violations of the obligations of freedom of the press.

We call on the participating States to stop violence against journalists, not to impose bans on entry, and to cease deportations, unauthorized detentions and refusals to issue accreditation to reporters. It is unacceptable to use financial and legal levers to squeeze the media out of its information space, in particular by prohibiting broadcasting, closing bank accounts or otherwise.

Thank you for your attention.