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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1376th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

2 June 2022

**On the Polish OSCE Chairmanship's dismantling of the
OSCE human dimension**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are unfortunately obliged to note that the Polish Chairmanship is increasingly driving our Organization into a dead end. Work in all traditional areas is effectively paralysed. That being said, it is the third "basket" that has suffered the most: the arbitrary management style and authoritarian leadership methods used by the Chairmanship there could have irreversible consequences. What is more, it is not only the OSCE's prestige that is taking a blow but also specific practical work in areas of such importance to participating States as combating trafficking in human beings.

The human dimension is being held to ransom by the Polish Chairmanship's bloc mentality. Over many months the Polish Government has been breaching its mandate to act as an "honest broker", breaching established practices and breaching the commitments undertaken by Poland as an OSCE participating State. All of the Chairmanship's activities pursue but a single goal, namely to denigrate Russia as much as possible and exclude our voice from the Organization's work.

We saw this in, say, the arbitrary revamping of the work of the Human Dimension Committee of the Permanent Council. The two most recent Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings will go down in the OSCE's annals as glaring examples of unprofessionalism and bias. That distinguished social activists from Russia were lumped in with organizations advocating violence and, indeed, terrorism was unwarranted and absurd.

Moreover, among those invited by the Polish Chairmanship to these supplementary meetings was, for example, the now former Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament), Liudmyla Denisova. Incidentally, she is one of the sources cited in the report on Ukraine prepared under the Moscow Mechanism. She was removed from her post a few days ago for relaying wildly absurd fake stories about sexual crimes allegedly committed by Russian military personnel in the course of the ongoing special operation. It was such misinformation – not to mention her overtly intolerant pronouncements – that Ms. Denisova disseminated at the OSCE, among other platforms. However, Poland preferred to turn a blind eye to this.

In mid-February, the Chairmanship suspended consultations on human dimension events without giving any reasons. We have repeatedly spoken of the need to resume such consultations so as to prevent last year's scenario from repeating itself. Significantly, at the meeting of the Preparatory Committee on 27 May, the Chairmanship attempted to ram through some patently "raw" decisions on the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, stating bluntly that consultations had been held on these decisions. Colleagues, this is not how consultations are meant to be held. The mode of behaviour adopted by the Chairmanship has very little in common with professional diplomacy.

In view of the outrageous incident involving the Russian ambassador to Poland, Sergey Andreev, who was attacked by Ukrainian radicals in the very heart of the Polish capital, we raised the issue of the host country's authorities being unable to guarantee the safety of Russian citizens living in Warsaw. The reply that we received from the Polish delegation was that it considered the incident to be "over" following the press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland in that regard. This press release is so brief that we will take the liberty of quoting it in full: "The event which occurred today while the Ambassador of the Russian Federation was about to lay a wreath at the Soviet Military Cemetery was a regrettable incident which should not have taken place. The diplomats enjoy particular protection, irrespectively of policies pursued by their governments."

As you can see, in this laconic document there is nothing at all that could serve to dispel our doubts as to how the safety of Russian citizens in Warsaw is ensured. There is not a hint of expressing an apology for what happened, not to mention assurances that such incidents will not be repeated in the future. It is for that very reason that at the Permanent Council meeting on 13 May we requested that consultations be held on the relocation of OSCE human dimension events to venues outside Poland. Not surprisingly, the Chairmanship refused to convene such consultations. The Western countries began, instead, to proclaim the fictitious necessity of Warsaw having to be the venue for these events. However, is that really so?

With regard to the Human Dimension Seminars, paragraph 17 in Chapter VI ("The Human Dimension") of the Helsinki Document 1992 does not rule out the possibility of their being held away from the seat of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).¹ As for the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, paragraph 9 in the same chapter states that "the ODIHR will organize a three-week meeting at expert-level of all participating States at its seat ..." A similar provision is to be found in Permanent Council Decision No. 476 (2002), which builds on the Helsinki Document. However, in the text of this decision it is stated that the Permanent Council may make adjustments "to the arrangements set out in the annexes, with a view to strengthening the effectiveness and attraction of the human dimension meetings further".

Moreover, in accordance with paragraph VI(A)2 of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE, "[t]he participating States shall adopt decisions regarding the time, venue, theme(s), agenda, timetable and organizational modalities for each OSCE meeting or for a series of OSCE meetings." Indeed, in decisions on the dates of Human Dimension Implementation Meetings and Human Dimension Seminars their venue is also specified.

The Guidelines for Organizing OSCE Meetings, approved through Permanent Council Decision No. 762 (2006), build on the Rules of Procedure. In paragraph 3 of the Guidelines it is stated that "[a]mong different considerations, the cost factor should be taken into account when deciding on the venue of an OSCE meeting. Another aspect to be considered when taking a decision on the venue is the need for geographical diversification and the desired level of participation."

1 "Unless otherwise decided, seminars will be held at the seat of the ODIHR ..."

As you can see, the possibility does exist for human dimension events to be relocated from Warsaw to Vienna. Even a cursory financial analysis indicates that the OSCE's "budgetary health" would benefit from such a move, too. After all, despite the need for ODIHR representatives to be sent to Austria on duty travel in that case, the expenses of participating States would be significantly reduced by their not having to send their experts working at OSCE headquarters to Poland. The expected increase in the ODIHR's budgetary requirements would in such a scenario have to be absorbed using existing resources.

We should also like to warn the Polish Chairmanship not to attempt to fund a potential non-consensus event in Warsaw out of our common "purse". If it is intended to hold a Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in any guise without relevant decisions by the Permanent Council, it is our understanding that all costs should be unilaterally paid from the funds of the Chairmanship. Budgetary appropriations cannot be used in such a scenario, since that requires the consensus of all participating States.

The logistical difficulties created by the collective West effectively preclude Russia's participation in the Organization's events in Poland. We are referring to the lack of direct flights, the suspension of the agreement with the European Union on visa-free travel for the holders of diplomatic passports and disruptions in the issuance of entry documents. One should also mention in this respect the mass expulsion of dozens of Russian diplomats, which has paralysed the work of the Russian Embassy in Poland. To say nothing of security considerations, which, furthermore, concern not just meeting delegates but Polish society as a whole. To make myself clear: a humanitarian crisis in the country is already being prognosticated on account of the massive influx of refugees from Ukraine. It is evident that by autumn the situation will have become further aggravated.

Finally, the holding of OSCE events in Poland, as in any other NATO member country, is in general no longer compatible with the nature of our Organization. The same is true of Warsaw being the seat of an OSCE executive structure, namely the ODIHR. I would remind you that in 1991, when the Office for Free Elections was established, Poland was not a member of NATO and was not even a candidate for admission into this military bloc. At the time the assurances given to the President of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev, that NATO would not expand eastwards were fresh in everyone's mind. However, the situation has changed radically since then.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Chairmanship's improper fulfilment of its obligations is gravely discrediting our Organization. We call for the launching of consultations on relocating the events under the third "basket" and the seat of the ODIHR to Vienna, where the OSCE headquarters are based. This is a long-overdue step, which would enable OSCE commitments to be implemented in better faith and would also allow savings to be made on logistic and other expenses.

Thank you for your attention.