

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1102nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

2 June 2016

**In response to the report by the
OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ms. Astrid Thors**

Mr. Chairperson,
High Commissioner,

We thank you for the report you have presented and your statement.

The analysis of the situation in the various OSCE participating States confirms once again that every country has its successes and difficulties in the area of human rights. It is therefore necessary to avoid a selective approach or to “pin labels” on individual States. There are many problems throughout the entire OSCE area in connection with the safeguarding of the rights of national minorities. And yet, the geographical scope of the Commissioner’s work remains unchanged.

We are extremely disappointed, for example, at Ms. Thors’ position on the situation in Ukraine. You continue to ignore the Ukrainian Government’s unwillingness to deal seriously with the problems of national minorities and to confront xenophobia and aggressive nationalism, which has been raised to the rank of a State policy, the draconian measures to deny the cultural and historical heritage of national minorities or its rewriting of history, its emasculation of the information media and other facts. As we can see from your report, many promises by the Ukrainian authorities to improve the situation of national minorities simply remain on paper.

We trust that the meeting with Russian minority organizations in March this year during the High Commissioner’s visit to Ukraine will be followed up. We would point out that they did not simply transmit information to you about the various “difficulties” encountered in “protecting and promoting their culture and language”, as it says in the report, but also provided written evidence of the deteriorating situation of the Russian and Russian-speaking minority and serious violations of their rights in Ukraine.

You also continue to cast aspersions regarding the situation in Russian Crimea. Assertions concerning “politically motivated pressure” and “repressions” have no basis in

reality. The prohibition of the Mejlis because of its extremist activities was in full compliance with the law, as we have already explained on several occasions. You continue to rely on the opinion of paid political mavericks like Mustafa Dzhemilev, based on the false assumption that he and his comrades-in-arms are spokespersons for the hopes of the entire Crimean Tatar people. I should like to inquire which other Crimean Tatar organizations you know of, apart from the so-called Mejlis. Why are the opinions of the many other Crimean Tatar non-governmental organizations not taken into account?

We regret the low priority given by you to the question of mass statelessness in Latvia and Estonia. This issue is not touched on at all in your report. It is striking that our Western colleagues, who are so active in other areas of human rights, continue to be indifferent to the fact that in a number of European Union countries part of the population is segregated and isolated in a separate category with a special legal status without parallel in international law. The failure to mention the discrimination against national minorities in economic affairs and the restrictions placed on Russian-language media and education in the Baltic States is incomprehensible. This point was mentioned, incidentally, in the recent report by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. There is a need for the Commissioner to respond to the flagrant persecution of anti-fascist veterans from national minorities, and the destruction of monuments and desecration of graves of those who fought against Nazism.

In our opinion, distinguished Commissioner, you should finally give due attention to the violations of the rights of national minorities in connection with the migration crisis in the European Union and also the persecution of the Kurdish minority in Turkey, which takes place in that country on a systematic basis.

It is gratifying to note your mention of the growth of nationalist rhetoric and the spread of hate speech. At the same time, it is unclear why problems in this area are mentioned only selectively. Russia has repeatedly raised questions about the pressure and persecution in some OSCE countries of Russian-language media, including in some cases their complete prohibition, the widespread phenomenon of aggressive nationalism, intolerance and discrimination of Russian-speaking citizens and representatives of other minorities, and the unprecedented growth of dangerous nationalistic groups and the use of Nazi battle cries and symbols, etc. The Office of the High Commissioner should play a significant role in the timely reaction to these threats and challenges.

We believe that particular attention should be paid to the preservation of the distinctive ethnocultural characteristics of national minorities and to the development of intercultural dialogue in society. Of equal importance is the creation of an environment in which national minorities can make a full contribution to the political, economic, social and cultural life of society. We note the Commissioner's intention of focusing on the language rights of national minorities and on access to education, including reforms in this area.

In conclusion, we should like to stress that failure to deal with the growth of intolerance, aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism poses a threat for the entire OSCE area. The Office of the High Commissioner is called upon to take an energetic and leading role in the effective combating of challenges of this nature.

We trust that your successor will indeed act in this manner.

Thank you for your attention.