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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1078th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 November 2015

**In response to the address by the President of the OSCE
Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Ilkka Kanerva**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. President of the Parliamentary Assembly,

We welcome you, Mr. Ilkka Kanerva, to today's Permanent Council meeting. We have carefully listened to your statement and will transmit the main elements to our capital, including the leadership of the Russian Federal Assembly. We are sure that these points will be read with interest there.

We should like, in turn, to make a few comments on matters of substance.

We regard the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as a useful pan-European platform for constructive dialogue on an equal basis among parliamentarians on the most pressing issues in the OSCE area and for the elaboration of joint solutions. It is this approach that guides the Russian parliamentary delegation to the Assembly.

We understand that at times the Parliamentary Assembly leadership has to operate under extremely difficult conditions, striving to find a way out of complicated political situations. This is particularly relevant at this time of crisis in European policy. Unfortunately, things do not always work out. For example, for the first time in the Assembly's history, the head of the Russian delegation and several of its members were refused entry to the annual session in Helsinki. The fact that the autonomous Parliamentary Assembly, which brings together 57 States and operates on the basis of its own Rules of Procedure, is being told what to do by a small group of States has set a dangerous precedent. We find attempts by other countries to determine who may or may not participate in OSCE Parliamentary Assembly meetings to be unacceptable.

I might add that at the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Assembly meeting, which was held in Geneva exactly a month ago on 19 October, its senior officials openly stated that sanctions against parliamentarians were unacceptable. All this underscores the need to consider the draft OSCE Parliamentary Assembly resolution on the inadmissibility of the use of sanctions against parliamentarians of OSCE participating States, which was prepared by

the Russian delegation in time for the meeting in Helsinki. Unfortunately, it was not considered.

Russia has always been guided by the logic of developing dialogue between States and between parliamentarians. Under the present difficult conditions, the urgency of maintaining inter-parliamentary dialogue is, in contrast, mounting, especially in the face of the growing common threats, primarily terrorism and radical extremism. Following the terrorist attacks in Paris that were unprecedented in their scale, the blowing up of a Russian airliner over the Sinai peninsula by terrorists, and acts of terror in Turkey and the Middle East, it is a matter of urgency to make concerted efforts to combat international terrorism. We trust that the Assembly will support the appeal by Russian parliamentarians to create a really broad international anti-terrorist coalition.

Another security challenge is connected with the serious migration crisis in Europe. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly should pay special attention to this, particularly its root causes and possible consequences, one of which is the rise in aggressive nationalism.

We look forward to a constructive contribution by the Assembly to the international efforts to stabilize the situation in Ukraine and to its support in putting into practice the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements. In particular, this concerns those provisions that require the involvement of the legislative authorities: the adoption of the relevant laws and constitutional reform.

The initiative to set up an inter-parliamentary liaison group on Ukraine, which was supported by Mr. Kanerva, remains as relevant as ever. We thank him for his efforts to organize meetings of Russian and Ukrainian parliamentarians on the margins of Assembly events. We look forward to continuing these contacts.

At the same time, we cannot agree with a number of assessments made by the distinguished President on Ukraine. The main document adopted in the context of the Ukrainian crisis is the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements, which clearly sets out a sequence of steps that need to be taken by the parties to the conflict and that are designed, on the basis of a political settlement, to help restore Ukraine's control over its State borders. As for the situation in the conflict zone, including its humanitarian aspects, it is pity that you have not managed to visit Donetsk and Luhansk, unlike the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Nils Muižnieks. This would enable you to see for yourself the consequences of the so-called anti-terrorist operation, which in addition to the death of more than 8,000 people has led to massive destruction of residential buildings and critical infrastructure in Donbas. It would of course be useful as well to be able to talk to the people who live there and to see the effects of the blockade imposed by Kyiv – the non-payment of pensions and welfare benefits and the hindering of the free movement of inhabitants between the regions on both sides of the line of contact. The more than one million Ukrainian refugees in the Russian Federation could also tell you about the situation in Donbas.

We completely disagree with your comments, Mr. Kanerva, regarding the Republic of Crimea. The inhabitants of Crimea and Sevastopol exercised their right to determine their own fate in accordance with international law and the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. This choice should be respected, including by the leadership of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. A number of parliamentarians, including members of the Assembly, were able to

see for themselves the real state of affairs in Crimea while observing the referendum in 2014 and during separate visits to the peninsula.

In conclusion, I should like to wish you, Mr. Kanerva, every success in your active and responsible efforts to deal with the difficult task of organizing the work of the OSCE parliamentary community and to help develop unifying approaches and overcome confrontation. In that regard, we note the parliamentarians' contribution to the Helsinki+40 process and are ready to continue work in this and other areas.

Thank you for your attention.