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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1117th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 November 2016

On the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists

Mr. Chairperson,

Freedom of speech is a key component of any democratic society. The exercise of this right is inextricably linked with the existence of independent and protected media and safe working conditions for journalists.

We resolutely condemn the killing, attacks, abuse and other crimes against members of the media in the OSCE area.

Violence against journalists during armed conflicts is unacceptable. It should not be forgotten that correspondents inform the public about events while finding themselves in difficult politico-military situations and frequently in mortal danger.

In that connection, we are extremely concerned at the fact that investigations have still not been conducted into the murders in Ukraine of the journalists Anatoly Klyan, Anton Voloshin, Igor Kornelyuk, Andrei Stenin, Andrea Rocchelli, Oles Buzina, Sergei Dolgov, Vyacheslav Veremiy, Pavel Sheremet and others. Many correspondents have been kidnapped and tortured. Not only the Ukrainian Government but also the European Union and the United States of America close their eyes to these crimes. These human rights violations are clearly being condoned in order to accommodate political interests.

We recall the key international documents to protect journalists in armed conflicts: United Nations Security Council resolutions 1738 and 2222, and also the 1977 Geneva Conventions and Protocol I to them. Their provisions should be strictly complied with.

Besides attacks, journalists face other types of violations of their rights. Strict censorship of the media and restrictive measures have become a regular occurrence in Ukraine. In order to silence journalists, contrived accusations of “separatism” have been levelled against them. The odious Presidential Decree No. 550 of 16 September 2015 remains in force, introducing sanctions lists for journalists. The legislative initiative by Ukrainian deputies to stop publications in the languages of neighbouring countries and to translate a

minimum of 75 per cent of broadcasts into Ukrainian is a discriminatory measure. Moreover, broadcasters will no longer be able to choose the language at their own discretion and dub or subtitle films in other languages. This considerably encroaches on the rights of Russian-speaking inhabitants of Ukraine to use and receive information in their native language.

Opposition to the activities of Russian media has turned into a matter of policy in a number of States in the OSCE area. As you are all well aware, this is an issue that we have raised many times in the Permanent Council.

We call on the participating States to put an end to violence against journalists and to stop entry bans, deportation, unauthorized detention and withholding of accreditation. It is unacceptable that financial or judicial leverage should be used to force the media from the information space, in particular by way of broadcasting bans, the closing of bank accounts or other means.

Thank you for your attention.