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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1160th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

12 October 2017

**In response to the statement by the Vice-President of the  
International Committee of the Red Cross, Ms. Christine Beerli**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Ms. Beerli,

We are pleased to welcome you to the Permanent Council and we thank you for your interesting presentation.

As one of the founders of the Red Cross in the nineteenth century, Russia was at the origin of its creation. We have worked closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for 150 years and share the ideals of humanism, neutrality and compassion that are the basis for the Committee's work. As a participant in the International Red Cross Movement, the Russian Red Cross also focuses all its efforts to help those in need. These include refugees, victims of epidemics, wars and conflicts, people with disabilities, migrants and other vulnerable groups.

We note the constructive working relationships we have established with the leadership of the International Committee along the entire vertical of power, beginning with the President of the Russian Federation and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

In our country, the traditionally impartial, conscientious and depoliticized nature of the ICRC's work is highly valued, especially in the "hotspots". This approach has earned the organization great respect in the world and in a number of cases helps it to operate in areas that other organizations cannot access. This is especially valuable against the backdrop of a trend towards the politicization of humanitarian actions.

We note the targeted efforts of the Red Cross to search for missing persons on the territory of Ukraine and to restore the family ties that have been severed in the course of the internal armed conflict in that country. The ICRC carries out significant work in Donbas. This complements the efforts of Russia, which provides humanitarian assistance to residents of south-east Ukraine suffering not only from shelling and attacks by the Ukrainian armed

forces and volunteer battalions, but also from the inhumane socio-economic blockade of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. At the same time, we draw the Committee's attention to the need to work more closely with local authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk.

We fully agree with the need to ensure the protection of civilian infrastructure in Donbas. Because of the shelling by Ukrainian security forces, hundreds of thousands of residents of the region have remained without electricity, heating and water, including during the winter. It is necessary to lift the transport blockade imposed by the "Maidan" Government, resume pension and social benefit payments and restore economic ties severed by the Ukrainian Government.

The extensive attempts by Ukrainian saboteurs to destabilize the situation are extremely dangerous. There is no reason to doubt that one of the members of the patrol of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine near Pryshyb was killed by an explosion from a mine that had been laid by them. Many civilians have died as a result of such mines.

It is important to facilitate the procedure for crossing the line of contact and to stop the criminal practice where Ukrainian security forces take relatives of militiamen hostage and prevent their families with children from returning to the territory not controlled by the government.

At the same time, it is important to clearly understand that the main threat to the peaceful inhabitants of Donbas stemmed and stems from the ongoing punitive operation by Ukrainian security forces. If a ceasefire is secured, the forces and hardware of both parties disengaged and the mines cleared, this will significantly improve the situation of the population.

We highly appreciate the work of the ICRC in Nagorno-Karabakh as a neutral intermediary in resolving the remaining humanitarian problems in co-ordination with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmen and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Andrzej Kasprzyk.

Russia was one of the founders of international humanitarian law. We appreciate the ICRC's commitment to its norms and principles and are ready to participate constructively in the intergovernmental process to ensure respect for this right. Our priority is the work to increase the potential of existing mechanisms in this field, including the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. It is important to ensure the participation of all States in this work.

Ms. Beerli,

In conclusion, I want to assure you that the ICRC can always count on Russia's active assistance in carrying out its difficult but noble mission.

Thank you for your attention.