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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1112th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 September 2016

**On the violation of the rights of persons with disabilities in the
context of the Paralympic Games**

Mr. Chairperson,

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) executive, with the support of the Court of Arbitration for Sport, has suspended the IPC membership of the Russian Paralympic Committee. As a result, Russian Paralympic athletes are now being denied the right not only to participate in the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, but also in the 2018 Winter Paralympics in Pyeongchang.

We are gravely concerned about this situation. We consider those rulings based on the high-profile, unsubstantiated McLaren Report, to be despicable and inhumane, and counter to the basic principles underlying Olympic and Paralympic values.

We are witnessing the application of the principle of collective liability to unproven violations. The practice of collective blame and punishment of athletes is prevailing as a result. Our Paralympic athletes are actually being denied a dream they have lived and worked for. Here we should also note that the individuals in question have limited opportunities, which adds to the cynicism surrounding these events.

Mr. Chairperson,

These decisions and the accompanying statements by officials reflect their bias and unprecedented hypocrisy, which has already provoked diverse responses on the part of the international sporting community. It is telling that international federations for Paralympic sports such as the International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation (wheelchair fencing), the World Archery Federation, the International Equestrian Federation and the European Para-Taekwondo Union have voiced their support for the participation of Russian athletes in the Paralympic Games in Rio.

In the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the principle of equal rights for persons with disabilities and those without disabilities is

enshrined as an underlying principle. In that connection, it is striking that unlike the Olympic athletes without disabilities, who were permitted to take part in the Olympic Games in Rio on the basis of a ruling by the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, the Russian Paralympic athletes have been denied the same opportunity. This is a flagrant violation of that underlying principle of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Russian Federation is deeply concerned about the unprecedented and inhumane frustration of the worthy aims of the Paralympic movement and the rights of “clean athletes” with limited opportunities. It is clear to us that this decision by the IPC also contravenes the principle of prohibiting discrimination on any grounds.

A legal assessment of the Court of Arbitration for Sport ruling about the Russian Paralympic team is to be carried out. However, even today it can be said with conviction that from a moral point of view, this decision is unfair and violates the norms of humanism.

We trust that this inadmissible situation will be properly evaluated during discussions on the subject of the rights of persons with disabilities, which is currently gaining ground at the OSCE, and that relevant provisions will be included in a draft decision on this subject at the forthcoming OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Hamburg.

In conclusion, I should like to thank the Azerbaijani authorities, which supported us by refusing the three additional licences from the Russian athletes, and to express our admiration for the gesture of the Belarusian athlete who participated in the Paralympic Games opening ceremony in Rio holding a Russian flag to show solidarity with my country’s Paralympic athletes.

Thank you for your attention.