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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1182nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 April 2018

**On the electoral methodology of the OSCE Office for Democratic
Institutions and Human Rights and the observance of
democratic standards in Sweden**

Mr. Chairperson,

For the advocates of the so-called “gold standard” the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) will have to show in practice that not all is gold that glitters.

The ODIHR takes decisions on carrying out scaled-down election monitoring, i.e. sending an election assessment mission or a group of experts, without clear criteria. Furthermore selection of such missions’ members takes place with very tight deadlines, making it effectively impossible to get “outsiders” included. For example, I repeat, the ODIHR sent groups of only three experts in 2017 to monitor elections in France (presidential election, 23 April), the United Kingdom (general election, 8 June), Germany (parliamentary election, 24 September) and Norway (parliamentary election, 11 September).

It also happens that for largely unjustified reasons the ODIHR decides not to send any observation mission to Western countries. Over the last two years this list has been joined by Liechtenstein, France (for the parliamentary election of 11 July 2017), Ireland, Cyprus, Iceland, Bulgaria, San Marino and Romania. There is no clear explanation for why these exceptions are made. This creates the impression that the ODIHR is taking a biased approach and shielding certain States, usually members of the European Union, according to its political preferences.

We are ready to provide a series of concrete examples regarding Sweden. For example, following the election to the European Parliament in 2009 and the parliamentary, local and regional elections in 2010, even the Riksdag committee noted serious democratic and organizational shortcomings. Among other things, it noted that allocation of parliamentary mandates in the election did not fully comply with the principle of strictly proportional distribution according to the number of votes. There were also violations in ensuring proper order at polling stations and cases of political campaigning at polling stations. There was poor access to polling stations for persons with disabilities and a shortage

at polling stations of sufficient numbers of ballot papers. Also, ballot papers were moved from one polling station to another in violation of the set procedures and there were problems with counting so-called early votes.

After the committee examined these complaints, repeat elections were held to the regional council of the county of Västra Götaland and to the municipality of Örebro (population 120,000) in 2011. But during these elections too, which were seen by many as “a defeat for democracy” (voter turnout was only 43 per cent compared to 80 per cent in 2010), violations occurred on a record scale. They primarily concerned the fact that the number of votes counted exceeded the number of people who voted. How does this conform with democratic standards?

Parliamentary, regional and local elections in 2014 also drew a large number of complaints from local and foreign experts about violations. At a number of polling stations ballot papers disappeared or were moved.

Owing to the shortage of ballot papers for some parties, election committee workers openly proposed to voters that they vote for other parties. There were two-hour queues outside one of the polling stations in Gothenburg, with many people leaving without having voted. Some people complained that they were unable to take part in the election because they were not on the voter lists and so their votes were not counted.

Three days after the election, two sacks containing 1,000 early votes, which should have been promptly sent to the polling stations, were discovered in a safe at a regional post office in north-west Sweden.

There were also cases of open extremism. For example, supporters of the racist Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir campaigned against the election and called on Muslims not to vote, and members of the neo-Nazi group the Nordic Resistance Movement attacked four polling stations in central Sweden where they rioted, destroyed equipment and seized and took away ballot papers.

There are also suspicions regarding violation of the principle of secret ballot. The problem lies in the specific nature of the Swedish electoral system, in which all parties at the different levels of voting have their own ballot papers which are put out in public at the polling stations. Specialists think that having people publicly choose their ballot paper directly indicates their political position and thus contradicts the provisions of the law banning campaigning at polling stations.

Another issue that has grabbed the headlines is the lack of transparency regarding Swedish political parties' financing sources. This issue was raised, incidentally, in October 2013 by the authors of the “Review of Electoral Legislation and Practice in OSCE Participating States”, which was prepared by the ODIHR itself. Despite the legal amendments made, parties remain under no obligation to declare income up to 1,500 dollars and have the right to postpone reporting for a period of ten months from the moment the donation was received.

Let us see whether the ODIHR and the Swedish authorities will take note of these lessons.

Thank you for your attention.