

PC.DEL/407/18

13 April 2018

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1181st MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

12 April 2018

**On the “war” against monuments in Poland**

Mr. Chairperson,

I should like to make a few remarks in response to my distinguished Polish colleague.

First, I should like to draw attention to the fact that the Polish authorities are ignoring their obligations under international law.

For example, the treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Poland on friendly and good-neighbourly co-operation of 22 May 1992 (Article 17, paragraph 1) states: “Cemeteries, burial sites, monuments and other memorial sites, both military and civilian, that are places of veneration and memory for the citizens of one of the Parties ... on the territory of the other Party shall be preserved, maintained and protected by law in accordance with international norms and standards and also with national and religious customs.”

On the basis of this treaty, on 22 February 1994, an agreement was concluded between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Poland on burial and memorial sites of victims of wars and repression. This document (Article 1, paragraph 1) states: “This Agreement regulates co-operation between the Parties on all matters related to the establishment, registration, development, preservation and proper maintenance of memorial and burial sites.”

Unfortunately, in recent years, Polish officials have started to overlook in both documents the words “monuments and other memorial sites”.

Furthermore, the Polish Government’s policy regarding the Soviet memorial heritage goes against the spirit and the letter of a number of multilateral agreements and declarations that are legally binding for Poland. Above all, this concerns the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe of 3 October 1985 (entered into force on 1 March 2012 in Poland). Article 1, paragraph 1, of this Convention defines the term “architectural heritage” as including monuments and all buildings and

structures conspicuous for their clear historical and social interest. Under the Convention, all Parties agree to take statutory measures to protect architectural heritage (Article 3) and prevent its disfigurement, dilapidation and demolition (Article 4).

The Polish Government's actions are contrary to its OSCE commitments, in particular, with regard to the 1991 Document of the Cracow Symposium on the Cultural Heritage of the CSCE participating States, which particularly emphasized the need to preserve monuments that are testimonials to tragic experiences in their common past, as well as architectural works of the twentieth century. It is sad that Poland itself is today grossly violating this document, which was adopted in an ancient Polish town.

I should like to recall that Poland's existence as a State only became possible thanks to the more than 600,000 Soviet soldiers and officers who gave their lives for its liberation.

This was recognized, in particular, by Winston Churchill, who it would be hard to suspect of pro-Soviet sympathies. He said: "Without the Russian Army, Poland would have been destroyed or brought into slavery and the Polish nation itself would have been wiped off the face of the Earth."

Thank you for your attention.