

PC.DEL/367/18
23 March 2018

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1180th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

22 March 2018

**In response to the statement on the election in the Republic of Crimea,
Russian Federation**

Mr. Chairperson,

I should like to use my right of reply, seeing as the representative of Ukraine has addressed the situation in one of Russia's regions. At the last Permanent Council meeting we already warned that we categorically reject the wording of this current issue. We have explained repeatedly that there is not and never has been any "occupation" or "annexation" of Crimea.

Let me start with a few words about the results of the Russian Federation presidential election in the Republic of Crimea. Voter turnout in Crimea and Sevastopol (close to 72 per cent) shows that people in this Russian region wanted to take an active part in deciding their future, which they link to Russia.

The election in the region was monitored by 3,976 observers, including 43 international observers from 20 countries, among which were the United Kingdom, Italy, the United States of America, Ukraine and France. With regard to the references to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), I remind you that the ODIHR does not hold a monopoly on election observation and, as far as we are aware, does not lay claim to this.

Statements on non-recognition of the election in Crimea and Sevastopol are null and void from a legal point of view. Crimea is an integral part of the Russian Federation. The Crimeans have made their historic choice, and life proved that this was the right choice. Crimea's reunification with Russia was the result of a referendum held on 16 March 2014, in strict accordance with international democratic standards. The people of Crimea exercised their lawful right to self-determination, which is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and a number of other international documents, including the CSCE Helsinki Final Act.

We also wish to draw attention to the nature of the restrictive measures that a number of Western countries have introduced following the Crimeans' decision for independence from Ukraine and reunification with Russia. These are effectively punitive sanctions directed against the people of Crimea. They limit Crimeans' possibilities and right to freedom of movement, restrict their access to goods and services, and are an attempt to punish them for their democratic choice. Such actions are no better than the criminal actions of the Ukrainian Government and the extremists, who have blocked the water supply to Crimea, cut off the power supply, and disrupt trade ties.

Intimidating Russian citizens who were engaged in organizing the voting in Crimea and Sevastopol is yet another example of a flagrant attempt to intervene in internal affairs, and this, along with preventing people from freely casting their vote, contradicts the OSCE norms and principles that Ukraine has itself invoked so many times.

The convincing results of the Russian Federation presidential election in the Republic of Crimea not only demonstrate the high level of trust in the current Head of State, but also reaffirm the results of the 2014 referendum and the choice the people of Crimea made for life as part of Russia.

Thank you for your attention.