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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1178th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 March 2018

**In response to the report by the Director of the Office for Democratic  
Institutions and Human Rights, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Madam Director,

Iceland, as we know, celebrates two women's holidays. Along with International Women's Day, which we mark today, there is also Konudagur, celebrated on 18 February. It is therefore with pleasure that we congratulate you on both of these holidays.

We thank you for your substantive presentation. We note also the detailed report on the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in 2017, which was circulated well in time for our consideration.

The ODIHR is the largest of the three human rights executive structures within the OSCE tasked with implementing the participating States' set objectives and operating on the basis of a collectively approved budget. We hoped that your arrival would make it possible to optimize the ODIHR's work, raise transparency, and intensify efforts in areas where there have been problems.

We are sure that the ODIHR should be sufficiently professional and flexible to be able to give due attention to all areas within its mandate. We cannot accept the erosion of key concepts, such as when, for example, freedom of religion is replaced with freedom of thought and belief, or with gender issues. And in the context of gender equality, the issue of guaranteeing women's social and economic rights, including ensuring the necessary conditions for being able to combine professional and family life, remains at best a humble afterthought.

We see the same situation with the protection of children. Although a number of OSCE countries have declared this a priority, the issue gains substantive content only with regard to combating the trafficking of children. This, of course, is important, but it is as if other aspects of the problem do not exist. Even the discussions on the rights of the child at the

seminar in Warsaw last year did not bring change in the old approaches. This situation must be urgently rectified.

We have spoken before at the Permanent Council about the need for the OSCE to pay greater attention to the rise in aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism. The lawlessness of radicals in Ukraine and the glorification there and in the Baltic countries of the Nazis' accomplices demand a clear response from the ODIHR, as do the ongoing attempts to rewrite the history of the Second World War. These are two sides of the same coin. Presenting this problem as some kind of "academic debate" that is outside the OSCE's area of work and concerns the past alone is not a viable option. The security and human rights system in our world today is based in large part on the decisions of the Nuremberg Tribunal. To cast doubt on these decisions is to cast doubt on our common security.

The ODIHR should also pay greater attention to migration issues, including violations of migrants' human rights in host countries and the generally worsening human rights situation in the European Union.

We are seeing far-reaching transformations of fundamental human rights concepts in the world today, which are gradually eroding the limits between freedom of expression and hate speech, freedom of the media and disinformation, tolerance and intolerance, and freedom of assembly and respect for the law. We hope that the ODIHR is monitoring these worrying developments.

We are concerned by the increase in anti-Christian, anti-Islamic and anti-Semitic sentiment in the OSCE area. Here too, the ODIHR must take a clear stand, all the more so as we have yet to see action on implementing the instruction given at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Basel in 2014 to draft a declaration on combating intolerance and discrimination against Christians and Muslims.

We should not overlook work in areas such as economic, social and cultural rights, inviolability of private life, protecting the institution of the family, eradicating statelessness, combating linguistic and educational discrimination, freedom of movement and human contacts, and the rights of persons with disabilities, including in sport. The ODIHR should be guided in practice in its work by the principles of the equality and indivisibility of all human rights. This is particularly relevant as we mark the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 25th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

Overall, as we have said in the past, there is a need for comprehensive optimization of the OSCE's entire human dimension. Russia has presented its proposals in that regard.

A number of issues remain regarding the ODIHR's election monitoring work. We calculate that in 2017 alone, the ODIHR sent close to 25 times more observers to States "east of Vienna" than to States "west of Vienna". This gap increased more than twofold compared to 2016. Often, electoral processes in western countries are unjustifiably overlooked by the ODIHR. The criteria and the excessively tight deadlines for selecting the "core teams" of observers are also increasingly puzzling.

In this respect, we would like to hear proposals for enhancing the ODIHR's election observation methodology and practice, which should be based on commonly agreed principles and rules.

For our part, we reiterate our readiness to continue constructive work with the ODIHR and its Director. This is demonstrated by the invitation sent to the ODIHR to send observers to the Russian Federation presidential election on 18 March. In conclusion, Ms. Gísladóttir, we wish you and all of the ODIHR staff success in your work.

Thank you for your attention.