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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1191st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 July 2018

On the promotion of gender equality

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Secretary General,

We are grateful for the detailed report on the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, which we have studied carefully.

We note your personal contribution, Secretary General, and that of the Secretariat as a whole to improving the profile of this problem in our Organization.

Looking at the work that has been accomplished, it is possible to say with confidence that evident progress has been made in safeguarding the equal rights and opportunities of men and women both in the participating States themselves and in the OSCE as a whole.

Obviously, a number of difficulties remain. But they should not be a cause for alarm. The most important thing is to ensure that efforts are consistent and that the attention paid in the Organization to the various aspects connected with the subject of gender equality is balanced. In that regard, it is important to remember that the basic responsibility for dealing with the tasks of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women lies with the participating States.

We continue to believe that the implementation of the Action Plan should not lead to a contest about numbers, whatever the field in question. Our task should be to ensure that the advancement of women and men in any professional sphere is dependent solely on their degree of competence and that it is free of discrimination. Discussion about an artificially created parity (50/50) is counter-productive. Consideration of the gender factor in the OSCE's programmatic and project activities should be based on the principle of common sense and necessity.

Unfortunately, discussion of the problem of gender equality continues to focus on the same issues. We have frequently suggested that the focus be shifted to issues such as protecting mothers and children, professional retraining of unemployed men and women,

ensuring paid leave to look after young children, protection and support of large or disadvantaged families, and also single parents, women working in hazardous industries, and combating discrimination in the workplace. We welcome the fact that at least some of these questions were discussed at the second OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on countering violence against women held on 2 and 3 July.

The issue of protecting the rights of women and children in the context of the migration crisis has lost none of its relevance. It is about safety, physical integrity and the right to a dignified life, particularly of women with children finding themselves in a foreign country and needing special protection.

We agree that participating States must pay unceasing attention to combating violence against women and children, particularly of a sexual nature. In our opinion, however, the corresponding Ministerial Council decision adopted in Basel in 2014 is sufficient for effective work in this area.

We do not agree with some participating States who suggest a putative link between sexual violence and the start or end of conflicts. We have already stated that there is no convincing evidence to date of a connection with the causes giving rise to armed conflicts or factors associated with their termination.

Our position remains unchanged regarding United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. There is no doubt that the document provides important guidance for increasing the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution and also the protection of women themselves during armed conflicts. But the arbitrary interpretation of this resolution and provisions of subsequent resolutions that has been imposed in the OSCE is unacceptable. The United Nations has always played the leading role here and its work should not be duplicated.

The National Action Plans in fulfilment of resolution 1325 are relevant only to countries in situations of armed conflict or post-conflict reconstruction and are of a strictly voluntary nature. They should not be used as criteria for assessing State policies for improving the status of women.

We cannot agree either with the idea sometimes suggested of setting up some kind of system for monitoring implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality or corresponding Ministerial Council decisions. There are events for this purpose in all of the Organization's areas of activity, during which participating States and representatives of civil society can regularly exchange views.

We do not see an urgent need for updating this OSCE Action Plan. The number of commitments in this area is impressive enough. What is needed are greater efforts for their implementation in practice. We are always open to a constructive exchange of opinions, however. In particular, we are in favour of the idea of elaborating and fixing a definition in the OSCE of "gender equality".

In conclusion, we should like to wish you, Secretary General, and your team every success in your future work in this important area.

Thank you for your attention.