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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1246th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 November 2019

**In response to the report by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities,
Mr. Lamberto Zannier**

High Commissioner,

We are pleased to welcome you again to the Permanent Council and thank you for your comprehensive report.

Your visit to Russia in June was a success. Consultations with a wide range of ministries and departments took place in a constructive atmosphere. Many issues relating to the protection of national minorities and ethnic groups both in Russia and in other OSCE participating States were discussed.

You visited Kazan, capital of the Republic of Tatarstan, whose society, as you rightly note, is “vibrant and diverse”. Children in this constituent entity of the Russian Federation today can choose to study in Russian or Tatar as their native language, both of which have the status there of official languages. Russian legislation does not provide for changing the official languages of national republics such as Tatarstan from compulsory to optional elements of the school curriculum.

We have taken note of your concern about the increased polarization in American society but also the lack of reaction to the plight of ethnic minorities in neighbouring Canada.

We should like to express our appreciation for your active involvement in work on the issue of statelessness, a problem of great relevance in the OSCE area. At the same time, we did not see any mention in the report of Estonia, where, as is also the case in Latvia, this disgraceful phenomenon continues to exist with the evident complicity of the relevant European Union human rights institutions.

You mention the adoption of amendments to the citizenship law in Latvia, which automatically guarantees citizenship to the newborn children of so-called non-citizens. However, this measure is cosmetic and merely masks the scale of this problem. Minorities in Latvia continue to face serious violations of their rights, in particular those relating to language and education. This was pointed out, for example, by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, in her remarks on 29 October. The preliminary comments by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities expressed similar sentiments with respect to Latvia’s implementation of the Convention.

This is accompanied by a rise in nationalism and neo-Nazism in Latvia, notably in the rhetoric of the country's top officials. For example, the Minister of Defence Artis Pabriks said in September that the "Latvian Waffen-SS legionnaires are the pride of the Latvian people and State". And in early October, President Egils Levits proposed making 17 March the Day of Remembrance of the National Resistance Movement, thereby giving official State recognition to the commemoration of the Forest Brothers. We would remind you that these "Brothers" were involved in massacres of the civilian population of Latvia and their ranks included former members of units of the SS, which the Nuremberg Tribunal designated a criminal organization.

You state in your report that "Ukraine has every right to strengthen the role of the State language ... However, these measures should be balanced with efforts to accommodate the diversity of the country." However, an approach that prohibits Russian print media, introduces language quotas for television and radio and continues linguistic and educational cleansing is hardly balanced.

By the same token, we share your concern at the "differentiated treatment" and the discriminatory approach by the Ukrainian authorities to EU and non-EU languages. Ms. Mijatović also recently expressed concern about this.

The plans by the Ukrainian leadership to switch teaching in Russian-language schools to Ukrainian in the coming academic year provides confirmation in practice of the double discrimination of the Russian language. Schools teaching in the languages of EU Member States do not have to make this transition until September 2023. The negative experience in the Baltic countries shows that even such a short "respite" will not be sufficient to enable proper adaptation to the new conditions, taking into account the needs of the ethnically diverse Ukrainian society.

The Ukrainian Government turns a blind eye to the increase in manifestations of xenophobia, aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism and deliberately attempts to distort the past. This is also borne out by the marches of thousands of nationalists throughout Ukraine on 14 October, which glorified those who actively collaborated with the Nazis and committed war crimes and crimes against humanity.

We urge you to offer a timely response to all of these challenges.

There is one more subject, the "de-integration" processes in Western Europe, which are accompanied by a growth in inter-ethnic tension within the States involved. This is something that deserves close attention.

We agree with you that a "balanced approach to education and language is a prerequisite to and starting point for ensuring participation and representation of all members of society". In that regard, the implementation of the Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life is increasingly relevant. We should like to confirm Russia's participation in the event in Lund on 14 November to mark the 20th anniversary of these Recommendations.

In conclusion, we wish you, Mr. Zannier, and your Office every success in your work.

Thank you for your attention.