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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1253rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 December 2019

On the report by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, Mr. Henrik Villadsen

Madam Chairperson,

We thank Mr. Henrik Villadsen for the report on his office's activities. We emphasize the importance of the conformity of the work of the OSCE field presences with the principles agreed by all 57 participating States.

We were very puzzled by the reference in your report, Mr. Villadsen, to a certain level of co-ordination on a number of issues, including defence sector reform, between your office and the NATO Representation to Ukraine. This clearly goes beyond the mandate of the OSCE field presence. It is completely unacceptable to devote our Organization's resources to pulling States that host its field presences towards the tasks of Euro-Atlantic integration. We recall that the present confrontational strategy of this military alliance, which cultivates Russia's image as the "enemy", does not square with the OSCE's principles for establishing a common and indivisible security space from Vancouver to Vladivostok. We urge the Co-ordinator to avoid taking such steps in the future.

At the same time, there are many real pressing issues in Ukraine that require the OSCE's close attention. Despite the change in the country's leadership this year, the difficult socio-political situation in Ukraine remains, exacerbated by the Ukrainian Government's military operation in Donbas.

The forced Ukrainization of the country is continuing, with the Russian language coming under particular pressure. The agenda of the Ministry of Education of Ukraine includes the forced application of the Law on Education. In 2020, it has been planned to completely switch the language of instruction in Russian-language schools to Ukrainian. Moreover, for schools teaching in European Union minority languages, this period has been extended to 2023. The rights of a significant part of the population are also being violated by the Law on Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language. A number of its provisions have already entered into force this year. Moreover, in Kyiv, plans are already being finalized to establish in the country a language inspectorate with a punitive role.

The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe has highlighted the discriminatory nature of both of these laws, noting that the Ukrainian Government's language policy could become a source of inter-ethnic tensions. The authorities have been encouraged to bring the laws in line with Ukraine's human

rights obligations. We note that the Co-ordinator is co-operating with the Venice Commission. We look forward to continuing this work with a view to introducing amendments into the laws that have been dictated by international standards. Mr. Villadsen, your close and functional co-operation with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights is also required.

It is still important to provide the Ukrainian authorities with assistance in resolving the systemic problems concerning media freedom. Media outlets, which provide a platform for the expression of critical views on public policy, continue to come under attack in the country. There is no progress in the investigation of crimes against media workers. The notorious Mirotvorets website, which was created by the current Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Anton Herashchenko, continues to keep blacklists of journalists and put their lives at risk. The Ukrainian Government's intentions to develop certain provisions on the requirements and standards of news are also a cause for concern. We urge the Co-ordinator, together with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, to closely monitor such phenomena.

The Co-ordinator's programme includes the topic of democratic control of armed forces. We hope that focus will be placed on the activities of the so-called volunteer battalions. The dubious status of these paramilitary groups and the cultivation of nationalist and neo-Nazi ideologies among them require special attention.

In order to strengthen the effectiveness of the judicial system, work particularly needs to be carried out with the Verkhovna Rada and the law enforcement and judicial authorities of Ukraine so as to ensure the proper investigation of high-profile crimes. So far, no progress has been made in the investigation into the tragic events in Kyiv in February 2014, as well as the massacre in the Odessa Trade Union House on 2 May 2014. OSCE assistance should help get these cases moving.

Active work on electoral issues is also important. International observers in the early parliamentary elections identified many serious irregularities. In violation of the CSCE Copenhagen Document of 1990, Russian observers were not allowed to participate in the monitoring as part of the mission of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The discriminatory decision of the Central Electoral Commission of Ukraine in relation to its own citizens – not to set up polling stations at Ukrainian diplomatic missions in Russia – made it impossible for around three million Ukrainians to vote. Both residents of Donbas and internally displaced persons residing in the rest of Ukraine were cut off from the electoral process. We urge the Co-ordinator, together with the ODIHR, to work out with the Ukrainian authorities ways to prevent such violations in the future.

Mr. Villadsen,

We trust that your programme will take due account of the tasks mentioned. Their fulfilment can make an important contribution to facilitating Ukraine's implementation of its OSCE commitments. We hope that your work will continue to be depoliticized and transparent.

Thank you for your attention.