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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1179th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 March 2018

On glorification of Nazism in Latvia

Mr. Chairperson,

Tomorrow, 16 March, Waffen SS veterans and their young radical supporters plan to hold their annual march to the Freedom Monument. On this same day, the organization Daugava Hawks will hold a meeting of the Society for Support of National Soldiers at the same monument. It is worth recalling that the Daugava Hawks was founded by former Latvian SS legionnaires, who took an active part in punitive operations and mass murders of Jews during the Second World War.

Unfortunately, we see that such marches have become a tradition in this European State. They take place despite protests by human rights defenders, anti-fascist organizations and the public.

The Latvian authorities, by attempting to present participants in the marches as “defenders of freedom” and “victims of the tragedy” that befell the Latvian people, are only encouraging a rise of neo-Nazism in the country and growing ultra-radical movements. This is evidenced by the initiative of the deputy in the Latvian Saeima and leader of the nationalist party All for Latvia Raivis Dzintars, who recently proposed declaring 16 March a *de facto* official day of commemorating the Latvian legionnaires. This initiative is not new. It had previously been rejected by Latvia’s lawmakers, who at that time were pursuing accession to the European Union. Today, the Latvian Government has evidently decided that it need no longer worry about what European capitals think of it.

Esteemed colleagues,

What we see here is the effective rehabilitation and glorification of those who, while in the ranks of the “volunteer Latvian SS legion”, committed mass crimes against humanity on the territory of Russia, Belarus and Poland, and were involved in large-scale punitive operations against hundreds of thousands of civilians and extermination of the Jews.

I remind you that the Latvian SS legion was established in Latvia by bringing two grenadier divisions under Nazi command during the Second World War and numbered a force of around 150,000 people. We have already provided information on this criminal formation to the OSCE.

Russia has repeatedly called for attention to be given to the situation in Latvia and condemnation of these shameful actions. Every year, the United Nations General Assembly adopts a resolution on combating glorification of Nazism, supported by the vast majority of States. Recently here, we commemorated the victims of the Holocaust.

In this context, we are surprised by the European Union's lack of adequate response to the Latvian Government's course and to its overt encouragement of glorification of the Nazis and their accomplices. Do such gatherings not insult the memory of the millions who died at the Nazis' hands during the Second World War, and do they not ignore the decisions of the Nuremberg Tribunal?

We call on the Latvian authorities to stop indulging the neo-Nazis and end these marches that are a disgrace for modern Europe, and we call on the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to give an objective assessment of the situation in Latvia. We hope that our European Union colleagues will not close their eyes to the situation and will urge the Latvian Government to respect its international commitments and its duty of conscience towards the victims of Nazism.

Thank you for your attention.