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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1079th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 November 2015

**In response to the report by the
OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Ms. Dunja Mijatović**

Mr. Chairperson,
Ms. Mijatović,

We welcome your efforts to monitor the situation in the OSCE region in terms of ensuring free access of citizens to information, media pluralism, and protection of the rights of journalists and their safe working conditions, particularly in conflict zones – although we do not always agree with your assessments and conclusions.

We are alarmed at the attempts to fragment the OSCE information space. There is a need to pursue a uniform logic in reacting promptly to similar violations in participating States of freedom of expression and of the media.

Unfortunately, restrictions on the media are systematically in place in all participating States, and intimidation of journalists is a common practice. It is in Ukraine, however, that media workers are most at risk. A number of journalists, including Russian ones, have been seriously injured or killed as a result of the actions of the Ukrainian security forces. Many correspondents have been kidnapped and tortured. This is not Russian propaganda but the opinion of Western non-governmental organizations, including the International News Safety Institute (London, report for 2015). The Ukrainian authorities have not even attempted to fully investigate the crimes against journalists, and the European Union and the United States of America continue to turn a blind eye to this.

A serious threat to the safety of journalists is posed by the United States Department of Defense Law of War Manual. Washington is effectively creating a legal loophole to deprive journalists of the status of civilians in armed conflicts and refusing them legal protection. Moreover, the United States of America has still not ratified the fundamental document in this area, the 1977 Additional Protocol (I) to the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

In a number of OSCE countries targeted pressure is being put on Russian journalists and media to obstruct their legal activities, including by way of attachment of their accounts and assets. We recall such cases in France and the United Kingdom.

In Latvia, Lithuania and Moldova political censorship of Russian and Russian-language media has been effectively legitimized, and sanctions have been imposed on the television stations Channel One, RTR Planet, Russia 24, NTV and Ren TV Baltic and also on news agencies such as the international news agency Rossiya Segodnya. Everything that does not suit our Western colleagues in the information space and offers a point of view or interpretation of events different from that of the authorities of the countries concerned should not be labelled “Russian propaganda”.

The right to introduce “legal” restrictions appears to be the privilege of just one exclusive group of countries. In addition, they are quite content to state that the actions of the authorities are in compliance with domestic law, despite the fact that the laws are unclearly formulated and give plenty of scope for highly selective interpretation.

We regularly raise these questions at meetings of the Permanent Council and with the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Another question that we have already touched on in our statements is the response to the problems existing in the OSCE countries. We need to be objective and aware that quiet diplomacy, personal correspondence and official public response are not one and the same thing. As a result, some violations appear in the general list within the Representative’s report to the Permanent Council and others are the subject of blaring headlines in press releases. And indeed, the press releases themselves, it has to be said, vary. For example, a number of violations of the rights of Russian media and journalists have been mentioned on several occasions anonymously in a general communiqué – a reaction of a kind, but without any specifics whatsoever.

If OSCE commitments are meant to apply to participating States according to the principle of equal responsibility for their implementation, it is impossible to understand why the work of the executive structures should be based on some other principles.

We are sure that the vast experience and professional expertise of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media will enable her to rectify this state of affairs. It would make a significant contribution to the development of constructive and far-sighted dialogue with this important institution.

Thank you for your attention.