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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1120th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

24 November 2016

**Regarding continuing discrimination of the
Russian media in the European Union**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are most disturbed at the adoption by the European Parliament on 23 November of the resolution on European Union strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties, which explicitly sets itself the task of opposing Russian media. Moreover, it is completely unacceptable for the opposition to the so-called “Russian threat” to be placed on the same level as combating the terrorist organization Islamic State. The European Union propaganda machine has really overstepped the boundaries of what is acceptable.

Apart from its evident Russophobic tenor, the resolution is a disgraceful example of discrimination against Russia media and contravenes not only key international standards regarding freedom of expression, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and OSCE commitments, but also the norms of the European Union itself regarding human rights and freedom of the media. Reference may be made in particular to Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Parliament resolution of 11 December 2002 on a Digital Freedom Strategy in EU Foreign Policy.

It would appear that the authors of such initiatives are so afraid of Russian journalists that they are willing to violate the same democratic principles they seek to protect. At the same time they assume the right to decide which media are genuine and which are propaganda. In this way, they brand undesirable media that offer alternative points of view to those of the Western establishments. In reality, what we are seeing is a blatant erosion of the perceptions of democracy in Western society.

One of the absurd aspects of the resolution is its aim of protecting against the alleged funding by Russia of “political parties and other organisations within the EU”, while at the same time we frequently hear criticism from Brussels and Washington of Russian laws regulating the activities of non-governmental organizations financed from abroad. In fact the

very idea by radical members of the European Parliament of combating propaganda was itself intended for its propaganda effect. It would appear that, in the heat of their anti-Russian rhetoric, our Western colleagues have completely tied themselves in a knot.

In fact, the document was not by any means supported by all European parliamentarians, and there were quite a few who took a sober view of the situation and even expressed criticism of the resolution. I will mention just a few names: Javier Couso from Spain, Tatjana Ždanoka and Andrejs Mamikins from Latvia, James Carver from the United Kingdom, Jean-Luc Schaffhauser from the French National Front, and Yana Toom from Estonia. The fact that of the 691 deputies who voted, only 304 supported the motion, while 179 were against it and 208 abstained, speaks for itself.

It is indicative that the Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr. Binali Yıldırım, condemned the European Union for its attempt to oppose Russian media, calling it a demonstration of the “poverty of democracy”. Philippe Leruth, President of the International Federation of Journalists, said of the accusations made by members of the European Parliament regarding Russian channels that these media should be given the opportunity to defend themselves against such accusations. This has not been done.

Double standards, particularly regarding freedom of expression, have always been the norm for the West. In spite of their assurances of respect for freedom of speech, many current and aspiring members of the European Union have long shown little restraint in taking openly repressive measures against Russian journalists and media. We have repeatedly drawn the attention of the Permanent Council and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to these cases.

For example, in April 2014, the authorities in Lithuania refused without reason to accredit the Russian Information Agency Novosti staff reporter, and then deported a camera crew from the All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company (VGTRK). In August 2015, Galina Sapozhnikova, a journalist from the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, was declared persona non grata in Lithuania and a “threat to national security”. On 21 November a decision took effect in Lithuania to suspend broadcasts by the channel RTR Planeta. Sanctions have also been imposed by the Lithuanian Government on the television stations Perviy Baltiyskiy, NTV-Mir and REN-TV Baltia.

In October 2015, the authorities in Estonia detained a VGTRK camera crew at the border. In September this year employees of the international news agency Rossiya Segodnya were refused entry into the country, although the agency was in possession of all the documents required for their work.

In spring 2015, Ukraine published a list of 115 Russian media whose accreditation had been temporarily withdrawn by the Ukrainian State authorities because their work allegedly “presented a threat to the security of Ukraine”. Moreover, the Ukrainian Government regularly infringes the rights of Russian journalists, refusing, for example, to allow them to enter Ukraine, not to mention the known cases of the killing, kidnapping, torture and intimidation of Russian reporters.

In October 2014, Poland withdrew accreditation for the Rossiya Segodnya journalist Leonid Sviridov, who had been working in Warsaw since 2003.

The authorities of the Czech Republic announced a decision not to extend accreditation for the Russian journalists Vladimir Snegirev and Aleksander Kuranov. The list could go on and on.

If they are really fighting for observance of human rights and freedoms regardless of political leanings, the parliamentarians from the European Union should first and foremost attend to these questions.

The drawing up by participating States of blacklists, the barring of entry or deportation of journalists, preventing television stations from broadcasting, demonization of the media and their labelling as disseminators of “disinformation” or “propaganda” are a sign of weakness and an inability to take criticism or to defend their point of view in a fair and competitive information environment.

It would seem that those members of the Western political elite who belong to the anti-Russian lobby have no need for arguments, legitimate rhetoric or even the truth. Evidently, this is what the “democratic values” of the European Union are about.

We demand that the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović, provides an appropriate response to the European Parliament resolution, which is a blatant example of a direct call for restricting such freedom.

Thank you for your attention.