

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1148th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 June 2017

**In response to the address by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of  
the Czech Republic, Mr. Ivo Šrámek**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Deputy Minister,

We welcome you to this meeting of the Permanent Council and thank you for your information about the priorities of the Czech Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Russia has always supported strengthening the role of the Council of Europe in the European architecture. This organization makes a practical contribution to the shaping of a pan-European humanitarian and legal space through its corresponding international agreements and helps to shore up the principles of democracy and the rule of law, mechanisms for protecting human rights and developing intercultural dialogue. This is precisely how the role of the Council of Europe is formulated in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation – as an independent regional organization with unique convention mechanisms. Like the OSCE, the work of the Council of Europe should, in our opinion, be aimed not only at the resolution of topical problems but also at moving towards the overriding objective of eliminating dividing lines in Europe.

We note the focus of the Czech Chairmanship on defending human rights. There are certainly enough questions for serious discussion in this regard. At the same time, some of the priorities, particularly those referring to vulnerable groups, are formulated in a rather vague way and leave scope for interpretation in bad faith. For example, effective efforts are required to eliminate phenomena such as large-scale statelessness – in the first instance in Latvia and Estonia – which are a disgrace for Europe. In spite of the acute nature of the problem, we do not see any effective approaches to their resolution either by the Governments in Riga and Tallinn or by the European Union. At the end of the 2016 there were over 247,000 non-citizens in Latvia – almost 12 per cent of the population – and over 82,000 or 6.3 per cent of the population in Estonia. I would recall that the authorities in Latvia and Estonia do not recognize “non-citizens” as belonging to national minorities and exclude them from the jurisdiction of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the

Protection of National Minorities. This has resulted in the systematic violation for many years of a whole range of rights of a significant part of the population of these countries. The failure to take account of these violations undermines the authority of the Council of Europe.

It is impossible for us to close our eyes to the massive human rights violations in Ukraine. Application of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms has been officially suspended in a large segment of its territory, precisely where violations of human rights sanctioned by the authorities are taking place – the blockade of Donbas and the shelling of civilians by the Ukrainian armed forces and nationalist battalions. Clergy and members of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church and other confessions are being persecuted in the country, undesirable mass media are being suppressed, and there is a crackdown on the rights of national minorities, in particular through the adoption of discriminatory laws.

We welcome the intention of the Czech Chairmanship to address the problem of the rights of the child and bolstering the institution of the family. We agree that the protection of children is particularly relevant in the context of the migration crisis in Europe. We understand that an opportunity for discussing this topic will present itself at the expert conference in Prague in September this year. However, the issue of children's rights is vast: it is important to pay attention to the upbringing and education of children, the protection of minors from sexual exploitation, and combating trafficking in children. Moreover, questions of education should not be limited merely to teaching about human rights but should rather address the right to education in its entirety.

It is gratifying to note that the Czech Chairmanship recognizes the danger of the further growth of extremist and radical forces in Europe. There is a need in this regard to discuss the entire range of challenges, including the increasingly frequent incidence in Europe of aggressive nationalism, xenophobia, neo-Nazism, and religious and racial intolerance. Regrettably, there is practically nothing in the priorities of the Czech Chairmanship about the most important task of our time, namely the fight against terrorism. There is no mention either of the highly topical problem of intolerance and discrimination against Christians and Muslims.

We are also interested in seeing the reform of the European Court of Human Rights aimed at strict observance by it of the principle of subsidiarity. Important focuses include the depoliticization of the Court's decisions, strict observance by it of the criteria for the admissibility of complaints, its jurisdictional framework, and the stability, consistency and predictability of its case law.

We also appreciate the fact that the Czech Chairmanship will be taking steps to achieve progress in resolving a long-standing problem, namely the accession of the European Union to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Unfortunately, some of the decisions adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe are a long way from reflecting the state of affairs on the ground. This applies in full to the non-consensus decision by it on Crimea of 3 May 2017. The decision is not about people or their rights and, consequently, is not about concern for the inhabitants of Crimea. The Russian Federation does not associate itself in any way with this decision. For us it is politically and legally meaningless.

A brief word about the co-operation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The key to its productiveness remains solid co-ordination to avoid duplication and the unnecessary dissipation of resources. The organizations need to work within the framework of the areas for co-operation agreed in 2005, namely combating terrorism and trafficking in human beings, the rights of national minorities, and tolerance and non-discrimination. It is important for them to concentrate on these topics and not to overreach themselves and seek new issues that in many cases are far from enjoying consensus.

On the whole, we believe that real progress can be made in the Council of Europe and the OSCE only through constructive co-operation and depoliticized work free of double standards. We hope that our Czech colleagues will be guided by these principles so as to ensure a successful Chairmanship.

Thank you for your attention.