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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1343rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 November 2021

**In connection with the
International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists**

Mr. Chairperson,

The International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, established by a decision of the United Nations General Assembly in 2013, is observed on 2 November. We categorically condemn all instances in which media workers have been killed, attacked or ill-treated. We are obliged to note that the situation is not improving, either in the world as a whole or in the OSCE area, when it comes to ensuring safe conditions for the professional activities of journalists. In this year alone, five journalists have been killed in the Organization's area of responsibility.

Unfortunately, our country is not immune either from isolated criminal cases in which media workers are the victims. The Russian law enforcement authorities pay particular attention to investigations into crimes against journalists. Investigative activities and legal proceedings in such cases receive wide coverage in the media landscape. A number of particularly high-profile cases have already been solved, and lengthy prison sentences handed down to the instigators and perpetrators. Every year, we send information on the progress of these investigations to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on a voluntary basis.

However, it is by no means in all the participating States that due attention is paid to clearing up crimes against journalists. As before, no light has been shed on the killings of 17 journalists that have occurred in Ukraine since 2014, including the murders of Anton Voloshin, Igor Kornelyuk, Andrey Stenin, Anatoly Klyan and the Italian photojournalist Andrea Rocchelli. It is surprising that not only the Ukrainian Government is turning a blind eye to these crimes, but also the European Union and the United States of America. After all, allowing impunity to persist makes it all the likelier that such crimes will be repeated. The National Union of Journalists of Ukraine has noted that attacks on media workers have become a constant reality, rather than an exception. For example, according to information from that organization, 59 instances of physical aggression against journalists have taken place in Ukraine in the first ten months of 2021. Every five days, in effect, a media worker is beaten up, or has his or her car set on fire or equipment damaged, or suffers some other violent act.

Threats of physical violence against journalists by radical right-wing organizations have become a widespread phenomenon in Ukraine. Unfortunately, such cases are also ignored by the Ukrainian authorities. The most recent example was the attack by several dozen radicals on staff from the Ukrainian national television channel Nash in Sumy on 30 October: journalists and cameramen there were beaten up on live television.

We are also extremely concerned about the proliferation of direct reprisals against journalists whose professional activities are perceived as “unwelcome” by the ruling regime. A glaring example is the persecution of Russian and Russian-speaking correspondents in the Baltic States. For example, in the space of just one week in Latvia, criminal charges were filed against 14 freelance journalists simply for having collaborated with the Sputnik Latvia and Baltnews news agencies; the First Baltic Channel was stripped of its licence; and the publicist Yuri Alekseev was sentenced to one year and two months’ imprisonment on trumped-up charges. The situation is not much better in Estonia, where in early March of this year the columnist Sergey Seredenko was also arrested on politically motivated charges.

Acts of intimidation, harassment and obstruction of the work of the media have become part of the policy of a number of other EU countries, including Poland, France and Germany. We have raised these issues at the Permanent Council on more than one occasion. We will not repeat ourselves, as all this material has been published.

Apropos of the safety of journalists, I cannot but touch on the quite literally critical situation that has arisen in the United States. The number of crimes against journalists there increased more than tenfold in 2020. Incidentally, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Teresa Ribeiro, drew attention to this during her visit to Washington, D.C. Of particular concern are the actions of US police officers during rallies: instead of protecting journalists, they ill-treat them and hinder their work. According to the US Press Freedom Tracker, a non-governmental organization, more than 100 instances of physical assault against journalists have been recorded since the start of this year alone, of which 49 were carried out by law enforcement officers.

We call on the OSCE participating States to end violence against journalists and to not subject them to entry bans, expulsions, unauthorized detentions or denials of accreditation. We believe that the protection of journalists is a political obligation of all States that should not be at the mercy of opportunistic whims. We propose treating the task of combating crimes against journalists as our common endeavour.

Thank you for your attention.