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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1184th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 May 2018

In response to the statements by H.E. Volker Türk, UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, and Mr. Manfred Profazi, IOM Senior Regional Adviser for Europe and Central Asia

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Türk,
Mr. Profazi,

We are grateful for the presented assessment of the situation of refugees and migrants in the world and the information on the co-operation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with the OSCE.

We welcome the UNHCR's activities to increase the effectiveness of the international protection of refugees and stateless persons. The IOM remains a reliable partner of States in addressing migration problems.

We share the concern relating to the complex migration situation in the European region caused by the mass arrival of migrants from the Middle East and North Africa. Particularly alarming are the cases of their deaths at sea, as well as the presence of a significant number of unaccompanied children in the mixed migratory flows.

We believe that the most reliable way to solve the refugee problem is to eliminate the root causes that force people to leave their homeland. In order to successfully address current migration challenges in Europe, it is above all necessary to prevent conflicts and reach a political settlement of conflicts in the States experiencing an exodus. It is also necessary to assist these States in social and economic reconstruction to ensure the voluntary return and prevention of new waves of migrants. It is extremely important to eliminate the possibility of foreign terrorist fighters and criminals infiltrating OSCE countries together with those who actually need help. The task remains to combat trafficking in human beings, including in the context of mixed migratory flows.

We are grateful to the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, for his positive assessment of Russian measures for the resettlement of refugees from Ukraine and the provision of humanitarian aid to the inhabitants of Donbas. As you know, the Ukrainian Government's heavy-handed suppression of protest sentiments in south-eastern Ukraine, as well as the brutality of the Ukrainian security forces and ultra-nationalists, led to a serious deterioration of the socio-political and economic situation in that country and the mass exodus of part of the population to Russia. As a result, we received more than 1 million internally displaced Ukrainian citizens on our territory.

We note the UNHCR's work on the problem of statelessness. In a number of European countries, including Latvia and Estonia, this shameful phenomenon is widespread, as Mr. Türk is undoubtedly aware. The reduction of statelessness should remain the Office's priority. A good example of co-operation between the UNHCR and the OSCE is the joint UNHCR/OSCE Handbook on Statelessness in the OSCE Area: International Standards and Good Practices. Given that the European subjects have not been fully reflected in this document, we believe it is necessary to continue this work. We urge the Office to increase its efforts in this area. The specialized structures of the OSCE, including the High Commissioner on National Minorities, must also actively address this acute problem.

We support the UNHCR's co-ordinating role in the development of the Global Compact on Refugees. At the same time, intergovernmental consultations are the main mechanism for such activities. The Compact should be aimed at strengthening the international refugee protection regime, based on the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto. It is within the meaning of these documents that we understand the global community's responsibility in dealing with the problems of refugees.

We also consider the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the draft of which is being developed within the framework of the United Nations in parallel with the Global Compact on Refugees, along the same lines. We note the IOM's efforts in preparing this important document. We believe that approaches to overcoming migration problems cannot contradict the basic principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, nor violate States' sovereignty and territorial integrity and be implemented without their consent.

It is worth reiterating the leading role of the UN and its specialized institutions in relation to migration and refugees. This is also determined by the corresponding decision taken in 2016 at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Hamburg. At the same time, the document defines the function of the OSCE executive structures, which should be aimed at sharing best practices and intensifying dialogue with the OSCE Partners for Co-operation.

In conclusion, we should like to wish the leadership and staff of the UNHCR and IOM success in their important humanitarian activities.

Thank you for your attention.