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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1225th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 April 2019

On International Roma Day

Mr. Chairperson,

International Roma Day was celebrated for the 48th time on 8 April. This event provides an opportunity once again to reflect on the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area.

We are unfortunately obliged to note that in many European countries Roma still find themselves socially isolated, suffering discrimination and marginalization. Problems remain regarding the access of Roma and Sinti to health care, employment and education. According to international organizations, in particular the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, more than 80 per cent of the European Roma live below the poverty line, and their community of 11 million continues to face mass expulsions in a number of European countries.

With the massive migration crisis in Europe and the rise in extreme right-wing and neo-Nazi sentiments in the last few years, there has been a growth in “Romaphobia” in the public perception, based on preconceived negative Roma and Sinti stereotypes. This is manifested increasingly in the form of violent attacks on their camps, large-scale anti-Roma protests and even an openly intolerant rhetoric in the statements by some politicians. At the same time, crimes committed by radicals frequently go unpunished. History is tragically repeating itself: Roma, who were exterminated by the Nazis along with the Jews before and during the Second World War, are once again victims of aggressive nationalism, not to mention the shameful forcible sterilization of Roma women.

These incidents do not receive an objective assessment by the human rights bodies in our Organization either, despite a solid set of commitments.

First of all, we might recall the adoption at the Maastricht Ministerial Council meeting in 2003 of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, aimed at integrating them in all spheres of public life and eliminating discrimination. No significant results have been achieved in the 15 years since then. In the meantime, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues is meant to be “keeping its finger on the pulse” and fostering their integration in society.

Some things are being done, of course. In September 2018, for example, a special session within the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting was devoted to the subject of Roma. However, according to the third report (published in December 2018) on the implementation of the Action Plan there has still been insufficient progress in this area.

For all the importance of the problems of Roma and Sinti, we should not forget the need to combat manifestations of discrimination in relation to national, linguistic and religious minorities in the OSCE area. We urge all participating States to take effective measures to protect them in accordance with international commitments.

Thank you for your attention.