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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1129th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 January 2017

**In response to the address by the
Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Minister for
Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Ioannis Kasoulides**

Mr. Minister,

We welcome you to the Permanent Council meeting and thank you for outlining the priorities of the Republic of Cyprus as the country chairing the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Russia views the Council of Europe as an independent and self-contained institution providing humanitarian support to the European security architecture. Under the current circumstances, there is particular need for the multifaceted nature of that organization, which forms a common legal space in the region.

Much depends on the Chairmanship, its efforts to identify unifying and topical issues, and its readiness to promote a balanced agenda, reconcile the differing and frequently diametrically opposed approaches of the Member States and avoid politicization.

We have carefully studied the Cypriot Chairmanship's programme and support many of its approaches, for example as regards the important task today of combating terrorism.

We consider a conference on European cultural heritage to be useful. It would be a suitable platform for discussing how to preserve common historical memory of the tragic events of the Second World War and how to put an end to the "war" against memorials in a number of OSCE participating States and Member States of the Council of Europe, where monuments to Red Army soldiers who sacrificed their lives to liberate Europe from Nazism are desecrated or even destroyed.

The topic of democratic citizenship is highly relevant in the light of the shameful phenomenon of mass statelessness in Latvia and Estonia. The visit to the region by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Nils Muižnieks, confirmed that there are serious problems there. In July 2016, there were more than 247,000 non-citizens in

Latvia, among them 301 children. This amounts to almost 12 per cent of the country's population. In Estonia, at the start of the year there were still more than 82,000 people without citizenship, in other words 6.3 per cent of the population. The authorities of these countries do not recognize so-called non-citizens as national minorities, meaning that they are not covered by the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which was in any case ratified by the Latvian and Estonian Governments with significant reservations. We believe that the positive experience of the Republic of Cyprus in this matter could be of help in achieving a quicker settlement of the issue.

At the conference in March on the development of cultural co-operation in the teaching of history, it would be useful to raise the question of the attempts to falsify central elements of European history, primarily the Second World War.

We welcome the focus on safeguarding social rights and the rights of persons with disabilities. Events on these topics and the conference in May on sport should not divert attention from the blatant cases of discrimination in sport, especially against athletes with disabilities.

In the discussion on migration it is important to study the root causes of the exodus of refugees to Europe from the Middle East and North Africa.

In contrast to the aforementioned points, we firmly believe that it is counter-productive for the Chairmanship to push neoliberal aims that are far from enjoying consensus and are patently alien to the European tradition.

The proposals for expanding the Council of Europe's co-operation with the countries of the southern Mediterranean are noteworthy. We believe that promoting democratic reforms in the region in conjunction with the European Union has a particular role to play. It is important in this regard that account be taken of the disastrous experience of the Arab Spring, which for the most part was provoked by external interference with the aim of overthrowing unwelcome governments and which resulted in an upsurge of terrorism, bloody conflicts and an exodus of millions of people into Europe.

We firmly believe that the Council of Europe should not close its eyes to the flagrant and massive violations of human rights in Ukraine, especially when the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms has been officially suspended in a considerable part of its territory. Greater efforts need to be made to get the Ukrainian Government to prosecute those guilty of crimes against their fellow citizens and finally to find and punish those who caused masses of people to burn to death in Trade Union House in Odessa. There needs to be real progress in the investigation into the murders that occurred during the Euromaidan period. According to the Council of Europe International Advisory Panel on Ukraine, the investigation conducted by the Ukrainian authorities into the tragic events in Odessa is not in keeping with the requirements of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms or with the criteria of independence, effectiveness and thoroughness within a reasonable time-frame. I emphasize that we are talking purely about humanitarian challenges. We are not calling for political assessments to be made; however, we are convinced that the Council of Europe needs to take effective measures to put a stop to the growing wave of discrimination against Russians and Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine. Otherwise, the organization's authority will continue to suffer.

Let me say a few words about co-operation with the OSCE. It is important, in our view, that the activities of the two pan-European organizations are closely co-ordinated so as to avoid duplication of effort and unnecessary dissipation of resources and that they are also carried out within the clear limits of the areas of co-operation agreed on in May 2005.

In conclusion, we should like to wish the Republic of Cyprus and you personally, distinguished Minister, a successful Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Thank you for your attention.