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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1136th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

9 March 2017

**In response to the report by the  
OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Ms. Mijatović,

In view of the fact that this is the last Permanent Council meeting at which you are presenting a report in your capacity as OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, we should like to begin with a few words of gratitude for your work over a period of many years in this post. Things have not always run smoothly between us. However, despite a number of differences, we succeeded in developing constructive co-operation. The constant dialogue on current issues between yourself and the official representative of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is further demonstration of this.

We are grateful for the depoliticized analysis of problems regarding freedom of expression and for the detailed reports on the work of your Office, which you have regularly presented to the participating States. We agree that there is a need for eternal vigilance in the work of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Today's meeting is a good opportunity to take stock of the situation. We consider it wrong to use this meeting for sweeping, politicized and unsubstantiated criticism, as the European Union and the United States of America have done. Let us be honest with ourselves. Quite a number of problems have accumulated in the OSCE area – political censorship, the persecution of undesirable media, the dissemination of fake news, negative propaganda campaigns, which take the form of total information wars, incitement to hatred and a lack of ethical standards in the work of the media. The latter is especially important: for the fact is that the higher the journalists' demands of their own work, the higher the quality of the journalism itself.

The media have now become an instrument that seriously influences public opinion and often results in disastrous consequences in real life. Bogus stories and the hysteria

provoked by them are frequently too pernicious to continue the thoughtless manipulation in the media sphere.

For example, an aggressive campaign against the Russian media has been waged by a number of countries, for the most part Ukraine, the United States and several members of the EU, for a number of years now. The unfounded accusations against our publications, television channels and radio stations of some kind of “propaganda” and “lies” are simply a pretext for restrictions and gross interference in their activities. The arbitrary labelling of media as the “mouthpiece of propaganda” serves as justification for exerting pressure, suspending broadcasts, closures and other restrictive measures. In fact, the authorities of these countries “punish” Russian media for broadcasting a point of view that the political elite considers undesirable. This is in fundamental conflict with democratic principles, the norms of international law and OSCE commitments.

Ms. Mijatović has repeatedly emphasized that propaganda, if indeed that is what it is, should be opposed by presenting other points of view for the public to judge. We are fully in agreement with this. Russian media are in fact trying to bring the most alternative point of view to the audience, for which they are being persecuted. We do not intend to accept this.

Recently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation began to publish on its website information about so-called fake news disseminated by foreign media. The purpose of this resource is to expose false propaganda, as Ms. Mijatović has recommended.

In terms of imposing “equality of online and offline rights”, we should like to reiterate that we do not agree in principle with the division of human rights and freedoms into certain “spheres”. As for the Internet, it is simply a means of communication, as were the telegraph, telephone, radio and television in their day. The right to receive, impart and exchange information and opinions using any means of communication is enshrined in key international human rights instruments. Incidentally, there is a crucial difference with the Internet – it can be used anonymously to disseminate malicious information. For this reason, the concept of the “uncontrolled nature” of the virtual network is unauthorized and even dangerous, but this is a subject for a separate serious discussion.

Mr. Chairperson,

Russia is committed to freedom and pluralism of the media. For that reason, as you are aware, we submitted a draft decision on this subject to the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Hamburg. Unfortunately, owing to the unconstructive position taken by several States, the document was not adopted. But we intend to continue to promote this key topic for the OSCE area.

In conclusion, we should like once again to thank Ms. Mijatović for her hard work and emphasize our willingness to continue to develop constructive co-operation with the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. We trust that Ms. Mijatović’s successor will be appointed soon.

Thank you for your attention.