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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1137th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

16 March 2017

On neo-Nazism in Latvia

Mr. Chairperson,

Today, the march on the occasion of the so-called Remembrance day of the Latvian legionnaires was once again held in Riga. The march was organized by the Limbaži branch of the ultra-right group “Daugava Hawks” and was held with the participation of deputies from the far-right political party “National Alliance”, which is part of the ruling coalition, and from Latvian nationalist movements. The issues anticipated by the authorities did not arise, but even before the march began the police detained two representatives of the Latvian Anti-Fascist Committee holding placards depicting the victims of fascism.

Such marches have unfortunately become a tradition in modern Latvia, despite the outrage of the public and human rights organizations. With his strong condemnation of the march, the President of the European Jewish Congress, Viatcheslav Moshe Kantor, gave a reminder of the obvious truth: a peaceful life in Europe and the upbringing of future generations are not possible without openly condemning the glorification of Nazism. He expressed concern and bewilderment at the Latvian authorities’ failure to act in this case.

It is regrettable that this outrage does not seem to be shared by the Western participants in the anti-Hitler coalition. In any case, we have not heard any statements about this from the Governments of France, the United Kingdom or the United States of America. As there is no reaction from the leadership of the European Union, which is usually quick to make harsh statements when it comes to others.

In essence, we are dealing with the *de facto* rehabilitation and glorification of those in the ranks of the volunteer “Waffen SS” Latvian Legion who committed numerous crimes in the territory of the Russian Federation, Belarus and Poland, and who were involved in large-scale punitive actions against hundreds of thousands of civilians, and in the extermination of the Jews.

We recall that the “Waffen SS” Latvian Legion was established in Latvia from two grenadier divisions under the command of the Third Reich during the Second World War and

numbered around 150,000 persons. Meanwhile, the Latvian authorities are persistently trying to pass off these war criminals as “freedom fighters”. On the eve of a century since the proclamation of the Latvian statehood, such neo-Nazi actions force us to seriously think about what historical “achievements” modern Latvia is oriented toward.

It is finally time for the Latvian Government to recognize the obvious – assemblies of SS veterans and their supporters insult the memory of millions of victims of the Second World War. It is not for nothing that the Nuremberg Tribunal recognized the SS as a criminal organization responsible for crimes against humanity. You cannot indulge ultra-radical movements that extol the Nazis and their accomplices under the veil of the arguments about freedom of speech and assembly.

The indulgence or, worse, the promotion of neo-Nazism inevitably leads to tragedies. It is not hard to find examples – we have been observing all of this for several years in one of our neighbouring participating States, where nationalists wearing Nazi symbols torture and kill people for their views.

We call upon the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to pay close attention to the situation in Latvia, as well as upon the authorities of that country to cease supporting or conniving with neo-Nazis and fulfil its OSCE commitments to combat racism, aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism.

Thank you for your attention.