

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1100th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

12 May 2016

On the 40th anniversary of the Moscow Helsinki Group

Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful to the distinguished representative of the United States of America for raising this topic.

Today the Moscow Helsinki Group marks the 40th anniversary of its founding in 1976.

Since then, the Group, along with our country, has lived through many tragic events. In recent years, it has also witnessed Russia's revival, the strengthening of the rule of law and the protection of human rights and freedoms within the country.

It is important that the Group is now a fully fledged participant in Russian civil society, one with which our governmental institutions are developing constructive, if not always simple, collaboration.

The clearest example of this is that the Group's Chair, Lyudmila Alexeyeva, has since 2002, by a decree of President Vladimir Putin, been included in the Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights (formerly the Presidential Human Rights Commission). She also belongs to a large number of Russian federal and municipal human rights commissions.

Other Group members – for example, Vyacheslav Bakhmin or the well-known Sergei Kovalev – have worked in different governmental legislative and executive structures.

Thus, in spite of its often harsh criticism of the authorities, the Moscow Helsinki Group has played and continues to play an active role in the elaboration of governmental decisions. It seems to us that by no means every OSCE participating State engages in such co-ordination with civil society.

As for the statements we have heard concerning “foreign agents”, in July 2013, the Group decided to refuse grants from abroad, and since then has continued to work in a fully effective manner.

Thank you for your attention.