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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 International Holocaust  
Remembrance Alliance, Ambassador Mihnea Constantinescu**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Ambassador Mihnea Constantinescu,

We join in welcoming you and thank you for your detailed address on the eve of International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

As we are aware, this date – 27 January – was not chosen by accident. Seventy-two years ago, Red Army soldiers liberated the death camp of Auschwitz, also known as Oświęcim. They brought to a halt one of the death factories in which millions of people, among them around 1 million Jews, had been systematically exterminated in cold blood. For the peoples of Russia, as for the other peoples of the multi-ethnic Soviet Union, who sacrificed more than 26 million lives for victory in the Second World War, the preservation of the historical memory of these terrible events remains a national responsibility.

As in previous years, a series of memorial and educational events as part of Remembrance Week began in Russia on 20 January. It is traditionally organized by the Moscow city government, the Russian Jewish Congress and the Holocaust Centre. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sergey Lavrov, attended the opening ceremony. Exhibitions, film showings, concerts, theatrical productions, remembrance lessons, lectures and excursions for schoolchildren and students are taking place in different parts of the country.

Tomorrow, on 27 January, the last day of Remembrance Week, candles will be lit in all the synagogues and Jewish community centres in Russia in memory of the 6 million Jews who perished in the Holocaust. Russia will also mourn the hundreds of thousands of victims of the 900-day siege of Leningrad. The day on which the siege was completely lifted is also marked in our country on 27 January.

Some years ago, the Restore Dignity project was launched at the initiative of the Russian Jewish Congress. It is carried out in co-operation with the Holocaust Centre and the

Eben Ezer Foundation of Evangelical Christians. As part of this project, the search continues for places where there were mass executions of Jews on territory that was occupied by the Nazis during the war. Fifteen memorials to victims of the Holocaust were erected in Russia in 2016 as a result of that work.

Esteemed colleagues,

It is important not to allow the falsification of the history of this terrible war and to prevent attempts to whitewash Nazism, legitimize the crimes of members of the SS, and give equal rights to victims and executioners, liberators and occupiers. Unfortunately, we are constantly observing such intentions in a number of OSCE States, including those that consider themselves to be developed democracies. We also see persistent efforts to present Hitler's allies and those directly involved in the extermination of Jews as freedom fighters. The unscrupulous war against memorials is cause for particular concern. Monuments to Red Army soldiers who gave their lives to liberate concentration camp prisoners and stop the Holocaust are being desecrated and destroyed in a number of countries.

Such actions are not only deeply immoral but also contravene the Charter of the United Nations and other international documents. They also question the rulings of the Nuremberg Tribunal, the 70th anniversary of the end of which we marked last year. Attempts to distort the essence of what took place in those years for politically opportunistic reasons today defile the memory of the victims of the greatest war in the history of humanity, including the victims of the Holocaust. With that in mind, every year in the United Nations General Assembly Russia puts forward a resolution on combating the glorification of Nazism. Against the background of growing international support for that initiative, it is most regrettable that only two OSCE participating States – the United States of America and Ukraine – vote against the condemnation of neo-Nazism.

In recent years we have witnessed the rise of anti-Semitism, aggressive nationalism, xenophobia, extremism, discrimination, neo-Nazism and religious intolerance in the OSCE area. The threat of terrorism is not diminishing. Under these circumstances, the fuelling of radical sentiments is unforgivable, otherwise the tragedy of the Second World War risks becoming another unheeded lesson of history.

Let me make just a couple of comments about the draft Hamburg Ministerial Council decision mentioned today on the working definition of anti-Semitism. Our position was quite clear, and we made it known as soon as the German Chairmanship put forward that initiative. As you know, the definition proposed for approval by the ministers was drafted and adopted without the involvement of Russia and its civil society. Furthermore, some States blocked the adoption of a declaration on combating intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions, despite the fact that they were called upon to agree on this in the Declaration on Enhancing Efforts to Combat Anti-Semitism adopted at the Ministerial Council meeting in Basel.

In spite of this, we were willing to work on the document. However, it became clear that the definition was being proposed for approval without any changes. Meanwhile, a number of authoritative Russian Jewish organizations called for further work on the document with the involvement of experts and the public in order to achieve global consensus on such an important issue. However, this constructive proposal was rejected by the document's authors who, for some reason, preferred to withdraw the draft altogether.

Consequently, any insinuations directed against Russia in this regard are completely inappropriate.

Thank you for your attention.