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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1267th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

14 May 2020

On the death penalty in the United States of America

Mr. Chairperson,

Like our colleagues from the European Union, we should once again like to draw attention to the situation with the death penalty in the United States of America. Despite the positive trends of the past few years, this form of punishment remains a feature of this OSCE participating State, along with miscarriages of justice and methods of implementation that are akin to torture.

A total of 1,516 death sentences have been carried out since 1976. As of January this year, 2,620 prisoners in the United States are on death row.

According to the non-governmental organization Death Penalty Information Center, 49 death sentences have been scheduled for this year, and five have already been carried out. This figure would have been higher had it not been for the coronavirus pandemic.

The US representatives often refer to the “legality of the death penalty” provided that it is “imposed and carried out in a manner consistent with a State’s international obligations”.

The manner in which the execution is carried out is the crucial factor here. Methods that can be equated with torture can hardly be considered lawful. I am referring, in particular, to lethal injections and the electric chair, both of which are methods used in the United States. Incidentally, the issue of the inhumane application of the death penalty in the United States has been covered in detail in “The Death Penalty in the OSCE Area: Background Paper 2019” of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. We should also like to recall that the Eighth Amendment to the US Constitution stipulates that “cruel and unusual punishments [shall not be] inflicted”.

Miscarriages of justice are not uncommon. Imposing the death penalty on the innocent is a flagrant violation of the fundamental human right to life. According to the Death Penalty Information Center, since 1973, 165 people sentenced to death have been exonerated. This number speaks for itself.

Once again, we call on the US Government to respect its international obligations to eliminate the torture and cruel treatment and punishment of prisoners and to remember the value of human life.

Thank you for your attention.