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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1095th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 April 2016

**Regarding the ban on broadcasting by the Russian
news agency Sputnik in Latvia**

Mr. Chairperson,

Once again, we have to revisit the topic of freedom of the media in Latvia.

On 29 March 2016, the Russian news agency Sputnik was informed that its website in the Latvian domain had been shut down. It was blocked in accordance with a request from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, stating that the agency's activities were allegedly covered by a Council of the European Union decision on restrictive measures targeting actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence.

We consider such allegations entirely groundless and politically motivated. Sputnik began work on the global media market in November 2014 and currently has multimedia information hubs in 34 countries, sites in over 30 languages, analogue and digital radio broadcasting as well as mobile applications and social media pages. It is abundantly clear that this would not have been possible if the agency's activities had not conformed to generally accepted norms and professional standards for the work of the media.

Latvia's actions towards the Sputnik news agency are the latest challenge to democratic values and contravene that country's commitments to ensure the freedom and pluralism of the media. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović, expressed concern about this matter and requested an explanation from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Latvia, Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs, who should respond. Hopefully we will not have to wait too long for an answer.

We can see that the Russian media is being deliberately pushed out of the information arena in several European countries not just with the tacit consent but with the active participation of the European Union, which obviously stands to gain from this situation. Double standards are the order of the day in Brussels and declaring Russian or any other media resources not representing a pro-western point of view to be "a mouthpiece for the Kremlin", "propaganda" or "a threat to national security" is enough of a pretext simply to ban

them. It is particularly telling that Latvia is banning the activities of an agency for allegedly “threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine”!

High standards to be sure.

Thank you for your attention.