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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

**Regarding the violation of the  
linguistic rights of national minorities in Ukraine**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are once again compelled to raise the issue of systematic and targeted violations of the linguistic and other rights of national minorities in Ukraine.

The latest act of this kind was a draft law on languages of the media, which was resubmitted for consideration by the Verkhovna Rada in February this year. It provides for a sharp increase in the mandatory share of television programmes in the Ukrainian language – at least 75 per cent of airtime per day, including on national and regional channels. Television channels are thus deprived of the opportunity to choose the broadcasting language at their discretion and to broadcast films and programmes with subtitles in another language.

As is known from her last report, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, expressed concern in this regard to the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, Andriy Parubiy.

The draft of yet another law submitted in January for consideration by the Verkhovna Rada – “On the State language” – provides for severe punishment for its violation by the media – from large fines to imprisonment. At the same time, calls for bilingualism are tantamount to a crime against the constitutional order of the country.

The President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, personally “blessed” this initiative of the Ukrainian parliamentarians, whose main goal is not concern for their native language, but, quite frankly, the infringement of the right of national minorities to access information in their native language. This is a right that Ukraine has pledged to respect by becoming a party to many relevant international agreements and organizations, including the OSCE. Such actions are contrary to the Ukrainian authorities’ numerous statements on adherence to “European values”. How do the Western patrons of the Ukrainian Government view the fact that journalists in Ukraine will be imprisoned for violating language quotas on television or radio?

In the same vein is the law signed by the President of Ukraine on 30 December 2016 on restricting access of foreign printed materials to the local market. It provides for a licensing principle for the importation of books published in the Russian Federation. Moreover, it prescribes that no more than ten copies of an authorized publication can be imported per person. So soon it will come to burning undesirable books in squares, as has already been the case in Europe's history. Ms. Mijatović has expressed her concern about this law to the Ukrainian authorities.

We have repeatedly noted here and in other international formats that the Ukrainian Government has for a long time been systematically working to cleanse its information space. It introduces "blacklists" in relation to foreign journalists, artists, actors and musicians, most of whom are Russian. It prohibits the broadcasting of Russian television and radio channels, the showing of works of the Russian film industry and the import of Russian-language fiction into the country. What is this if it is not the undermining of the right to freedom of speech? This was stated by the President of the International Federation of Journalists, Philippe Leruth, in reaction to the closure of the Russian radio station Radio Vesti by the Ukrainian authorities. But the United States of America and the European Union prefer not to notice such a violation of the freedom of speech.

The fact that censorship and other tough restrictive measures against the media in Ukraine have become systemic is also confirmed by President Poroshenko's approval in February this year of the "Information Security Doctrine of Ukraine", which, in fact, opens the door for the authorities to establish total control in the information field. I am not even going to mention the infamous "Mirotvorets" ("Peacemaker") website, which, contrary to its name, carries a serious threat to the lives of dissident journalists and other public figures.

We again demand that the Ukrainian Government strictly adhere to its international obligations in the field of ensuring the linguistic and other rights of national minorities, freedom of the media and of expression. We call on the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Offices of the High Commissioner on National Minorities and of the Representative on Freedom of the Media to continue their constant monitoring of this situation.

Thank you for your attention.