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**ADDITIONAL REMARKS BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1302nd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

11 February 2021

On violations of freedom of the media in the OSCE area

Madam Chairperson,

We shall briefly respond to the remarks made by our distinguished colleagues.

With regard to Ukraine, I would emphasize that the imposition of sanctions against three Ukrainian television channels is tantamount to extrajudicial punishment. This has also been noted at the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, where they pointed out how a decision of that kind had to be taken by the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine in compliance with the law and on the basis of public evidence – which was, of course, not the case. And by the way, why have the chief zealots of the law done nothing in response to the position adopted by the professional association of Ukrainian journalists? For some reason, no audible support for the latter is forthcoming from the Western embassies applauding the bans. The suitably enticed NGOs monopolizing the various freedom of speech ratings are, for the most part, keeping silent as well.

In view of this, it is comforting that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has expressed its concern over the step taken by the Ukrainian Government and its effect on freedom of expression in Ukraine. Its Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine is currently assessing the conformity of the Ukrainian authorities' decisions with international law. For us, it is evident at this stage that the decree signed by President Zelenskyy violates Ukraine's domestic legislation and the country's international human rights obligations, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, conventions adopted under the aegis of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Council of Europe, and OSCE documents. The rights of millions of Ukrainians to freedom of opinion and expression have been grossly trampled underfoot, for they are effectively being denied access to information.

Moreover, through such actions the Ukrainian Government is openly encouraging local nationalists, who have indeed been given complete carte blanche thanks to the West's support for the Ukrainian policy of repression. This was most eloquently confirmed by a demonstration under the slogan "Let's crush the vermin!" organized by radicals, or, to put it bluntly, neo-Nazis, outside the headquarters of another Ukrainian television channel, namely Nash, immediately after sanctions were imposed against the three

channels in question. We heard no condemnation of these raging jobs' actions. Yet, this does not tally with existing OSCE commitments, notably Part III, paragraph 19, of the 1999 Charter for European Security, in which the OSCE participating States committed themselves "to counter such threats to security as violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including [...] manifestations of intolerance, aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism".

We should like to remind separately the distinguished representative of the United States of America of some remarks made, in connection with another country, by the US Department of State's spokesperson Ned Price at a press briefing on 3 February of this year: "the United States condemns media censorship anywhere in the world. [...] media censorship is a hallmark of dictatorships [...] We condemn blocking, harassment and other tactics to stifle independent media voices, including [television]." This raises the question as to how the statement just delivered on behalf of the United States at the OSCE tallies with the official position of the leadership of your foreign affairs ministry. As always, it is a case of hypocrisy and double standards. According to the logic of the United States and its closest allies, media outlets must not be shut down in some places, whereas in others it so happens that they should by all means.

Incidentally, the way in which members of the media are treated in the United States itself speaks volumes. As reported by Fox News, a few days ago in the state of Florida, agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation arrested the local journalist Douglas Mackay for spreading memes that made fun of the Democratic Party. Despite the assurances by the current President, Joe Biden, to the effect that freedom of speech is one of the pillars of US democracy, that country has seen the start of what is effectively a wave of political repression and a total clampdown on freedom of expression.

As for the censoring of the information space by digital platforms, this time the attempts by the US representative to deny any influence by the State on "private" Big Tech companies are not very convincing given one important aspect. The US media outlet Protocol recently published an infographic that clearly demonstrates the close ties between the new Administration in the United States and information technology giants such as Google, Facebook and eBay. So that it does not seem as if I am making unsubstantiated allegations, I shall give a few examples.

One of President Biden's closest friends is Nick Clegg, Vice-President of Global Affairs and Communications at Facebook. Similarly, Vice President Kamala Harris's niece worked for Mark Zuckerberg for a long time, while the husband of Ms. Harris's niece to this day works in an executive role at Facebook's department of global partnerships and advertising technology. Or consider, for example, Nicole Wong, who was Legal Director for Products at Twitter in the early 2000s and subsequently served as Deputy Chief Technology Officer in the Obama Administration: she joined Mr. Biden's transition team in November 2020. Indeed, that team on the whole included a considerable number of executives from technology companies. This in many ways explains the digital platforms' current editorial policy.

As for the Latvian Government's mantras about its commitment to freedom of speech, there is no need to comment on them. No amount of repetition can change black to white.

Thank you for your attention.