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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1489th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 September 2024

On International Translation Day

My name is Alexander and I started my diplomatic career as a Farsi translator.

I should like to endorse the points made by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Belarus about the importance of United Nations General Assembly resolution 71/288 adopted in 2017, which declared 30 September International Translation Day, and to congratulate our indefatigable colleagues in the booths and thank them all sincerely for their difficult but so important work.

As defined by the General Assembly, professional translation plays a significant role in bringing nations together, facilitating dialogue, understanding and co-operation, contributing to development and strengthening world peace and security. In other words, translation, as “a trade and an art”, should be seen not just as a technical function, but as an integral part of the overall endeavour to increase opportunities for human contact.

So far, no one at the OSCE has looked at language services from this angle.

To return to the supporting function of professional translation, we should mention how absolutely indispensable it is for maintaining clarity, a positive atmosphere and productivity in any intergovernmental organization. Given the consensus-based nature of the OSCE’s work, it should be recognized that the Organization relies heavily on the availability of quality language services. Without professional translation, it would not be possible for the participating States to have meaningful discussions or to work out solutions.

Language is the greatest asset that mankind possesses. Language is the “house of being” and the engine of progress, the main force by which we can express our ideas and communicate with each other.

The language of each nation is a living organism, inextricably linked to the history, culture and social life of that nation. By communicating and interacting with one another, speakers of different languages transmit the culture of their people through language, and the key link in interlingual communication is the interpreter or translator. Translation is without a doubt a very old human activity. From the very beginning, it has fulfilled a vital social function, enabling people to communicate across languages.

What does it mean to translate? At first glance, it seems quite simple. What was said in the source text must be formulated correctly in the other language. But there is an old anecdote about a seminarian who had to translate the sentence “Spiritus quidem promptus est, caro autem infirma” from Latin. The seminarian translated this Gospel saying “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak” as “The alcohol is good, but the meat is rotten”. This translation is correct in the sense that each of the words can be translated that way, but it does not convey the meaning of the original text.

Translation is an important aid that ensures that a language fulfils its function of communication when people express themselves in different languages. Translation may therefore quite rightly be seen as an act of interlingual communication.

Many eminent Russian writers and public figures have paid great attention to translation. The social significance of translation was highlighted by Alexander Pushkin, who called translators “the mail horses of enlightenment”. Vissarion Belinsky, Nikolay Chernyshevsky and Nikolay Dobrolyubov all attached importance to translation in their works.

Although the translator can unerringly plumb the hidden depths of a writer’s thought, there are sometimes intractable linguistic and other problems that prevent the two texts from becoming fully equivalent.

Pushkin’s story *The Squire’s Daughter* was published in Persian several times: in 1956 as a separate book under the title *Do Del Dade* (“Two Lovers”) translated by the poet Eghbal Yaghmai; and in 1965 under the title *Dokhtare Rostai* (“The Peasant Girl”) translated by Kazem Ansari. Thus, translation can be said to be the translator’s personal creation.

It is hard to disagree with my Belarusian colleague’s idea that in today’s world it is important to learn to respect and appreciate diversity and not to try to see the world in a simplistic way, for example by seeking dominance through language, which can only breed hostility and mistrust.

In conclusion, I should like to stress that the absolute priority for our Organization should be to ensure the full equality of all the working languages, with their resource requirements covered by the Unified Budget on a parity and non-discriminatory basis, and to maintain the high quality of interpreting and translation services. We note the Secretariat’s efforts to achieve these objectives and are ready to work together in that regard.

Thank you for your attention.