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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1135th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

2 March 2017

**In response to the address by
UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection H.E. Volker Türk**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Türk,

We appreciate your assessment of the situation of refugees and migrants around the world.

We share the view that the most reliable way to successfully solve the refugee problem is to eliminate the root causes that force people to leave their homeland. We recall that the causes of the current migration crisis in Europe were the imposition of pseudo-liberal values in the region of the Middle East and North Africa without taking into account the cultural and civilizational diversity of the modern world; the fueling of conflicts and the actual encouragement of terrorism. The ability to overcome this crisis lies in the policy of non-interference, the peaceful settlement of conflicts, the fight against terrorism and the support of States in their socio-economic recovery.

The Russian Federation considers the provision of assistance to refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons as one of the priority areas of international humanitarian activities. Co-operation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as the main international structure for the protection of these categories of persons is of paramount importance.

This is evidenced by the recent successful visit to Moscow of the High Commissioner Filippo Grandi, during which Russia confirmed at a high level its intention to continue providing the UNHCR with comprehensive support, including financial support. It was stressed that the Office's activities are very much in demand not only from the point of view of humanitarian assistance, but also to maintain stability in regions with a complex socio-political and migratory situation.

We are grateful to the High Commissioner for his positive assessment of Russian measures for the resettlement of refugees from Ukraine and of the humanitarian assistance

provided to the inhabitants of Donbas. As you know, the Ukrainian Government's violent suppression of protest sentiments in south-eastern Ukraine, as well as the atrocities committed by Ukrainian security forces and ultranationalists, led to a serious deterioration of the socio-political and economic situation in the country and the mass exodus of part of the population to Russia. As a result, we received over 1 million internally displaced Ukrainian immigrants on our territory.

Mr. Chairperson,

On 19 September 2016, Russia actively participated in the preparation and holding of a high-level plenary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants. We commend the results of that meeting. We support the leading role of the UNHCR in the development of the Global Compact on Refugees. The main negotiating forum for this is the United Nations. We believe that the development of the Compact should be based on the provisions of already existing international instruments. At the same time, we reaffirm our position on the unacceptability of the concept of "shared responsibility" promoted by a number of States.

We support the efforts of the UNHCR to address the problem of statelessness. We consider useful the assistance provided by the Office to governments in reforming their legislative systems to facilitate the acquisition of citizenship by stateless persons, especially children, and in developing civil registration and documentation systems. We firmly believe that the elimination of statelessness should remain the Office's priority, including in the context of interaction with the OSCE. As it was noted, there are 715,000 stateless persons in the OSCE area. Most of them live in Latvia and Estonia, where statelessness is on a mass scale and enshrined in law. The phenomenon of so-called non-citizens, which is shameful for modern Europe, is unfortunately of little concern to the leadership of the European Union. We place considerable hope on the relevant work of the UNHCR with the Governments of Latvia and Estonia, and urge the Office not to weaken these efforts. Naturally, the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities should also be active on this issue.

In conclusion, we should like to ask you, Mr. Türk, to convey to the High Commissioner Filippo Grandi and to all the UNHCR staff our wishes for success in your important humanitarian work.

Thank you for your attention.