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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1299th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL  
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

21 January 2021

**On the address by the Acting President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,  
Peter Bowness**

Mr. Bowness,

We have listened carefully to your address as Acting President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and would like to share a number of comments.

Russia is in favour of increasing the profile of the Assembly as a platform for mutually respectful and constructive dialogue on the most pressing issues in our Organization's area. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical role of multilateral co-operation and the need to move away from confrontational approaches. This common misfortune should unite us, not exacerbate divisions and contradictions.

We are convinced that in today's challenging environment, the Parliamentary Assembly retains the potential to strengthen a unifying agenda. In the first instance, this concerns the approach to countering terrorism. Recent terrorist attacks in the OSCE area confirm the need for an effective legal and regulatory framework to address the full range of challenges and threats posed by terrorist activity. We regard the Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism as a platform for exchanging useful national experiences.

The tasks of overcoming the economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis and restoring the affected industries and disrupted economic ties are of prime importance. There is also a need for dialogue on strengthening Eurasian trade and transport connectivity and simplifying customs and border procedures in the interests of aligning integration processes in the OSCE area and forming a Greater Eurasian Partnership.

The rise of aggressive nationalism, neo-Nazism, racism and xenophobia is alarming. Remembrance of the Holocaust, the history of which, like other tragic events of the Second World War, some try to distort, should serve as a warning against repeating the horrors of Nazism and fascism. This history teaches us the devastating consequences of indulging in attempts to transform multi-ethnic States into mono-ethnic models.

The relevant structures of our Organization, including its parliamentary dimension, should respond promptly to manifestations of intolerance against Christians and Muslims. Measures are needed to prevent insults to the feelings of believers and the incitement to interreligious hatred and conflicts.

The information space is more vulnerable today than ever before. The major information technology giants have already made no secret of their intention to bring the Internet and other resources under their strict censorship control, and are putting it into practice. This raises the question of the need for urgent action, including legislation, to curb such “appetites”, which undermine the foundations of democracy and the rule of law. Parliamentarians should have assessed this phenomenon. The same applies to the attempts by some States who proclaim themselves “beacons of democracy” to blatantly interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.

We support the efforts of parliamentarians to observe elections. Nevertheless, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, like the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, needs to redress the geographical imbalance in this area by increasing its focus on electoral processes in States west of Vienna. There is a need for the OSCE to develop uniform, consensus-based rules for election monitoring.

Promoting conflict resolution in the OSCE area should be a focus of the Assembly’s attention. The events in Nagorno-Karabakh have demonstrated this. The main thing now is the consistent implementation of the provisions of the tripartite statements by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia of 9 November 2020, which stopped the escalation of violence, and of 11 January 2021, which opens up extensive opportunities for the development of economic and transport links in the South Caucasus.

As for Ukraine, we observe continuing attempts to distort the essence of the internal Ukrainian crisis, which only make the prospect of a settlement more remote. We call on the Parliamentary Assembly to adopt an impartial stance based on an objective assessment of what is happening in the east of that country. Maximum assistance should be given to the Government in Kyiv and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk to find mutually acceptable solutions as soon as possible on the basis of direct and meaningful dialogue.

We would like to draw the Parliamentary Assembly’s attention to the statement adopted by the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on 20 January this year in connection with the ongoing persecution of the Russian language in Ukraine and the entry into force of further bans on its use under the Ukrainian law on supporting the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the State language. We see this as an odious attempt to consolidate the course of forced Ukrainization and assimilation, above all of the Russian-speaking population, in this multi-ethnic country. We stress that the Ukrainian authorities’ discriminatory legislative initiatives run counter to Ukraine’s international commitments. There is a need to work more actively with Ukrainian parliamentarians to rectify the situation.

In conclusion, it is to be hoped that parliamentary diplomacy will play a prominent role in promoting a unifying agenda in the OSCE area.

Thank you for your attention.