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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1101st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 May 2016

In connection with the International Day of Families

Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful to our Belarusian colleagues for raising this highly topical question. The International Day of Families offers an ideal opportunity for considering how to strengthen the protection of this key element of society. Indeed, the role of families is not simply to increase the population. It links generations and is a basic pillar in the social structure vital to the development of society as a whole.

The International Day of Families this year is devoted to the role of the institution of the family in the achievement of sustainable development goals. Families are no less interested in preserving the economic, political, social and demographic stability of the State than the State is interested in strong families. In this matter, families and the State are genuine partners, working together to build a better future.

This is also the thinking behind Russian family policy, which is aimed at restoring and preserving traditional family values. The work of the State bodies in Russia is designed to improve family well-being and to enable them to fulfil their social and educational functions. Special attention in this regard is devoted to the bearing and raising of children, who are the main linking element between generations and the basis for the continuous renewal and development of society and the State as a whole. We firmly believe that support and protection of families in all its forms by the State is vital to the safeguarding of the entire spectrum of human rights and freedoms in any country.

Unfortunately, there has been a tendency in a number of OSCE States in the last few years to deliberately weaken the institution of the family and disregard the cultural, religious and moral values amassed by civilization. The active promotion of so-called “new notions of family” aimed at destroying the traditional received wisdom of humanity with regard to this institution and its significance is particularly dangerous. Ideas of this nature are frequently advanced under the guise of freedom of expression, while at the same time anyone who disagrees with them is immediately accused of intolerance. The result is a one-sided idea of freedom of expression.

Mr. Chairperson,

On the initiative of the Group of Friends of the Family, which includes Russia, a series of events in connection with the International Day of Families was held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 16 and 17 May. The main event was a high-level meeting entitled “Uniting nations for a family-friendly world”, which was a breakthrough in its own way in this area. This is a good example for us, since this topic has been undeservedly forgotten in recent years within the OSCE. Starting with the Helsinki Final Act, a significant set of commitments has been elaborated in the OSCE to safeguard family ties and contacts, protect private and family life and strengthen the role of families in countering trafficking in human beings, among other things.

Representatives of civil society took an active role in the discussions in New York. Moreover, the establishment was announced of a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) called Civil Society for the Family, which already includes 165 organizations. Representatives of religious associations, civil society and NGOs described the attacks on the institution of the traditional family and marriage observed throughout the world as outright pressure bordering on “totalitarian measures”. Mention was also made of the inadmissibility, under the guise of defending human rights and freedoms, of discrediting the institution of family and marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

In that context, attempts to suggest that defence of traditional family values and the institution of the family and refusal to accept the aggressive intrusion of neo-liberal ideas in the guise of freedom of expression, assembly and association are an invention and a matter of concern for just a few countries are not tenable. Current discussions on the subject confirm that this matter worries a large number of people throughout the world. We have often heard calls from our partners to “listen to the voice of civil society”. We believe that the position of many States and NGOs on the subject of family values in this case is no exception.

We call on the current German and future Austrian OSCE Chairmanships to take due account of the subject of the family in the agenda of the Organization, including the Human Dimension Committee. Moreover, the specialist OSCE executive structures should take up this issue in their work. It might also be worth considering the holding of an OSCE event to share experiences on supporting the institution of the family and defending motherhood and childhood.

Thank you for your attention.