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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1096th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 April 2016

**In response to the report by Mr. Michael Georg Link,
Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Mr. Michael Georg Link, to the meeting of the Permanent Council and thank him for his statement. We note with regret the departure from the tradition of distributing reports by executive structures in advance so that participating States can familiarize themselves with them. We see this as a lack of respect for the work and time of others. Today we shall make comments of a general nature, although we may provide additional comments later on.

We have continued to keenly follow the ODIHR's election observation activities, which remain the most important aspect of the Office's work. We cannot help but notice that the Office still has a great deal to do in order to fully handle the task of assisting OSCE participating States at their request in the implementation of their respective commitments.

The geographical imbalance in the number of missions deployed is one of the entrenched problems in the ODIHR's election-related activities. In the past three years alone, the number of monitors "to the east of Vienna" (1,292 people, excluding short-term observers) was over ten times greater than mission staff in Western countries (128 people), where the Office has decided to still monitor elections, which happens very rarely.

As we are actively involved in observation activities within monitoring missions, and not only with the ODIHR, we are convinced of the need to adjust the Office's work to the times and to agree with OSCE participating States upon a methodological basis for election observation. This could significantly boost the level of trust in the ODIHR's professionalism and objectivity, which is something that the Office sorely needs.

A number of colleagues today again mentioned the publication last year of the Report of the Human Rights Assessment Mission on Crimea by the ODIHR and the High Commissioner on National Minorities. We consider this one-sided and biased document to be

evidence of the prejudice of these executive structures, which directly violate their mandates as well as the norms and principles of the Organization's work.

In terms of the thematic priorities, we welcome your intention, Director, of according greater attention to combating the intolerance and discrimination faced by those who oppose neo-Nazism. In this regard, we call on the ODIHR to react in a clear and effective manner to the excesses of nationalists in Ukraine, the glorification of Nazi supporters in the Baltic States, and the anti-Islamic, anti-Semitic and anti-Christian displays in States of the European Union.

We note with satisfaction the greater emphasis placed on the protection of children – a topic which plays an unjustifiably small part in the work of the ODIHR, and of the OSCE as a whole. The Office's work should be stepped up in a number of other areas currently of relevance to the OSCE. We are referring to a whole range of economic, social and cultural rights, respect for the right to a private life and a family life, the freedom of movement, and so on. We hope that in this regard, as you have just said, the Office will be guided by the principle of equality and the indivisibility of all human rights.

In connection with claims that we are constantly hearing from numerous countries about the independence and autonomy of the ODIHR, we should like to emphasize that we do not share this vision. The Office's activity is defined by the decisions of the collective bodies of the OSCE, as well as by its approved mandate. Not only work funded under the budget, but also ODIHR's extrabudgetary projects must not exceed OSCE commitments, and decisions and instructions which have been taken by consensus. In this regard, we think, quite the contrary, that it is important to boost the transparency of the ODIHR's work and its accountability to participating States.

For our part, we confirm that we are always prepared to work constructively with the Office and its Director, but we should remind you that co-operation is a two-way street and the Office needs to work more effectively with participating States.

Thank you for your attention.