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PC.DEL/382/19  
5 April 2019

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1224th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 April 2019

**On the presidential election in Ukraine**

Mr. Chairperson,

The first round of the election in Ukraine revealed serious problems with democracy and human rights in that country.

Let us look at the statement of preliminary findings and conclusions by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) observation mission. The observers noted many gross violations during the election. There were numerous claims: vote-buying, illegal financing of the election campaigns, violation of the secrecy of the vote and the “silence” regime on the day before the voting, media bias, the absence of wide public debate and many others.

Massive misuse of administrative resources for election purposes is mentioned. The activities of the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko during his election campaign “challenged”, as the ODIHR mission report diplomatically put it, paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 CSCE Copenhagen Document. I would recall that this paragraph calls for “a clear separation between the State and political parties; in particular, political parties will not be merged with the State.”

The report states that the hastily imposed legislative restrictions by Ukraine on short- and long-term Russian observers for the ODIHR mission were “at odds with paragraph 8 of the 1990 CSCE Copenhagen Document”. It may be recalled how the Ukrainian representative tried to assert the opposite at the last Permanent Council meeting.

The same thing may be said of the decision by the Central Election Commission (CEC) of Ukraine not to open polling stations at Ukrainian diplomatic missions in Russia, where several million Ukrainians are living temporarily, which discriminates against the country’s own citizens. The inhabitants of Donbas and internally displaced persons in the rest of Ukraine were denied the right to vote.

It might also be worth mentioning the numerous reports by Ukrainian media and non-governmental organizations (including OPORA and the Committee of Voters of Ukraine) about “phantom voters” in the electoral lists or alternatively the omission of citizens from these lists. It is strange that in spite of this, the

authenticity of the voter lists was not called into question by the observers. We urge the OSCE participating States and the ODIHR to give their attention to this in the run-up to and during the second round of voting.

Journalists also have a hard time. The brutal suppression of freedom of speech by the Ukrainian authorities is a matter of concern not only for us but also for international observers. The refusal to allow foreign correspondents into the country or grant them access to polling stations during the election, the expulsion of Russian correspondents and even threats of physical violence by home-grown neo-Nazis are all part of the chilling reality of Ukrainian elections. Foreign citizens – Marc Innaro, a representative of the Italian public broadcasting company, and Christian Wehrschütz, Kyiv bureau chief of the Austrian national broadcaster ORF – have been subject to reprisals. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Harlem Désir, has in fact also mentioned this. The malign practice of expelling Russian journalists occurred again right on the eve of the election. The reporter Margarita Bondar from ukraine.ru was deported from the country, allegedly for “non-objective representation of the socio-political situation”. On the day of the election, nationalists prevented Vladimir Romensky, a correspondent of the TV channel Dozhd, from filming at the CEC building and also insulted him. We recall that Kirill Vyshinsky, director of the portal RIA Novosti Ukraine, is still languishing in his cell in a Ukrainian prison, detained on trumped-up charges.

We regard assertions concerning the “illegal annexation and occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation” to be unacceptable in the context of the expression of will in Ukraine. In a referendum in 2014, the inhabitants of the peninsula voted in a free expression of will in favour of reuniting with Russia. The legitimacy and full compliance with international law of the referendum cannot be questioned. Remarks of this nature are all the more unacceptable from the ODIHR, which does not have a mandate to give opinions on territorial issues.

We trust that following the results of the second round of the elections, the ODIHR will be able to offer the international community an objective picture of the voting in Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention.