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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1285th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 October 2020

**In response to the report by the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for
Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Mr. Valiant Richey**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Richey,

We are pleased to welcome you once again to a meeting of the Permanent Council.

The fight against trafficking in human beings is becoming more urgent, given the scale of the problem and alarming trends in this area. Poverty and social exclusion, the marginalization of certain segments of the population, the legalization of the sex industry, and insufficient support for mothers and children are some of the factors that drive trafficking – and they still persist. A number of them, including some of the socio-economic problems arising from the coronavirus pandemic, have only worsened – not to mention the steady demand for “human commodities” and the “flourishing” of child pornography on the Internet against the background of COVID-19, as has been pointed out by experts.

These and other issues were discussed in July during the 20th Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference, which, among other things, focused on ways to effectively punish criminals. We will certainly study the progress of that important forum, on which the Office of the Special Representative plans to report soon. We expect that discussions at the forthcoming National Co-ordinators meeting in November, along with the series of themed webinars proposed today, will be equally useful. We hope that the fairly busy schedule in preparation for the Ministerial Council meeting in Tirana will not prevent them from taking place.

We support the Co-ordinator’s mandate for the entire Organization. We regard the “policy to practice” approach to solving problems in this area mentioned in Mr. Richey’s report to be a positive one. We think that this experience would also be useful for a number of other OSCE structures.

At the same time, we believe that the Office has a clearly defined mandate. In combination with the aforementioned pragmatic approach, this mandate should serve as an “antidote” to the inclusion in the Office’s work of concepts that are not customary in the legal systems of most countries. We have seen what the absence of such “counterbalances” can do, with the announcement in July this year by the leadership of

the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, without the agreement of the participating States, of the establishment of some sort of “International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council”.

At the same time, we welcome the Special Representative’s commitment, within his direct mandate, to take on less visible but no less dangerous forms of trafficking, such as trafficking for the purpose of removing human organs. As you mentioned, Mr. Richey, in July the OSCE held its first extensive discussion in many years on this highly important topic. It attracted the attention of specialists from many countries and international organizations and confirmed the need to strengthen co-operation among States – as regards not only human organs, but also tissues and cells. The recommendations mentioned by Mr. Richey today will be of great assistance in that context. We hope that this issue will be on the permanent agenda of our Organization, along with such negative phenomena as trafficking in children, sexual exploitation and many others.

In conclusion, we should like to stress once again that consolidated efforts by the international community and the sharing of best practices are required, including through co-operation with the United Nations and the Council of Europe. Close co-operation between the law enforcement agencies of countries of origin, transit and destination is essential in that regard. Partnerships, including public-private ones, could act as the “force multiplier” that the Special Representative talks about.

We wish you, Mr. Richey, and the staff of your Office continued success.

Thank you for your attention.