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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1141st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

6 April 2017

On International Roma Day

Mr. Chairperson,

On 8 April, International Roma Day will be celebrated for the 46th time. This event gives us a good opportunity to jointly assess the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area.

As you know, in the main countries inhabited by Roma in Europe, including in the Member States of the European Union, negative phenomena regarding the representatives of this ethnic group in the social and economic sphere and their exclusion from the public and political life of society persist. Last year's expert report by the European Commission shows that, despite the measures taken, discrimination against Roma is still widespread in the EU. The report, in particular, notes the growth of Anti-Gypsyism, which is described as "a specific form of racism, closely related to [...] stereotypes".

We regret to note that there are no real developments in this area at the local level in the EU countries. The same conclusion was reached by the European Commission. Roma still face prejudice, attacks and even mass expulsions. Problems remain with their access to health care, employment and education.

It is not for the first time that these issues have been put in the framework of the OSCE, but, unfortunately, we have not heard from our Organization's human rights bodies objective assessments of the situation of the Roma as a whole or a response to specific cases of their persecution. In this respect, we should like to urge participating States to take effective measures to fulfil their obligations regarding the protection of national minorities, including with a view to improving the situation of Roma in Europe.

We are ready to share our experience of protecting the rights of Roma. This protection is effectively the responsibility of a unique body, the Federal Autonomous Ethnic Cultural Organization of Russian Roma, which was founded at the inaugural congress of Roma of Russia in 1999. Its main statutory goals include preserving language and ethnic identity, developing Roma education and culture and expanding the Roma movement to all regions of

the country. Similar Roma regional autonomous organizations have been established in constituent entities of the Russian Federation, and these help to boost Roma awareness of their ethnic identity and improve their proactive defence of their rights and interests.

Thank you for your attention.