

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1097th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

21 April 2016

**On the blocking of the website of
the Russian news agency Sputnik in Turkey**

Mr. Chairperson,

On 14 April 2016, Turkey's Information and Communication Technologies Authority summarily blocked the website of the Russian news agency Sputnik and Ankara district court upheld this decision already by 16 April. The verdict was deemed to be valid on the grounds of "concerns about the protection of the lives, property and safety of citizens, as well as national security, public order and crime prevention". In addition, Sputnik was not represented during the court proceedings.

The situation took a new turn on 20 April 2016, when the Turkish authorities prohibited the entry into the country of the chief editor of Sputnik, Tural Kerimov, who was also refused accreditation and a residence permit without any explanation offered.

We look upon this as a completely unauthorized action and yet another gross violation of fundamental human rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech and the right to access information. The Turkish authorities' policy of tightening the screws on the media and unjustifiably harassing journalists continues to be applied in practice – something for which Turkey has been subjected to scathing criticism from authoritative international and civil society human rights organizations on numerous occasions. We recall, for example, how in March of this year, new trustees were appointed and investigations initiated against the media group Feza and the editorial office of the newspaper *Zaman*. An act of protest in connection with the persecution of journalists in Istanbul was violently suppressed by police who used tear gas against the protesters.

The actions of the Turkish authorities have been criticized by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, who referred to the blocking of the Sputnik news agency's website as "only the latest in a series of issues" which her Office had raised in recent years in relation to problems in Turkey regarding the protection of the freedom of expression online.

We call on Turkey to fulfil its OSCE commitments regarding freedom of expression and freedom of the media and to discontinue its persecution of journalists.

Thank you for your attention.