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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1300th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

28 January 2021

International Holocaust Remembrance Day

Madam Chairperson,

We welcome the Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, the distinguished Ambassador Michaela Küchler.

The 77th anniversary of the end of the inhumane siege of Leningrad by the Wehrmacht in 1944 was marked on 27 January. This event was one of the most important milestones in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people. And on 22 June it will be exactly 80 years since the start of that most destructive war.

Exactly one year later, on 27 January 1945, the Red Army liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau (Oświęcim) concentration camp. Ambassador Küchler recalled this today. As many as four million people were exterminated in this Nazi factory of death, including about a million Jews. A total of six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust, 40 per cent of whom were citizens of the Soviet Union. We will always remember this tragedy.

In that context, we note the historic decision by the Soletsky District Court in the Novgorod region in October 2020. For the first time in Russian legal practice, the mass murder of Soviet citizens by the Nazis during the Great Patriotic War was recognized as genocide. The decision refers to the extermination by the Nazis and their accomplices, primarily from Latvia, of at least 2,600 citizens of the USSR near the village of Zhestyanaya Gorka in the Novgorod region. According to the court's findings, the mass murders were part of Nazi Germany's plan to expel and eliminate the entire civilian population of the Soviet Union in order to colonize the vacated territory.

The Week of Remembrance, traditionally organized by the Russian Jewish Congress, the Moscow City Government, the Holocaust Centre and the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, is taking place for the seventh time in Russia at the federal level from 18 to 31 January. This year's commemorations will be held in over 70 regions across our country. The events include academic conferences, webinars, memorial evenings, film festivals, plays, social media activities and exhibitions. One of them, prepared by Israel's Yad Vashem complex and dedicated to the fate of women during the Holocaust, opened on 27 January in the Russian Parliament.

Through another programme, “Restoring Dignity”, the number of monuments and plaques to Holocaust victims is steadily increasing. Almost one hundred have been erected since 2009 alone, and more than 10,000 of the dead have been named. These are just a few examples of how the memory of the Shoah is honoured and preserved in Russia.

Madam Chairperson,

In the words of Yuri Kanner, President of the Russian Jewish Congress, the aim of society and humanity is to make it impossible for such a tragedy, such an atrocity, to happen again. This can be achieved only if the unacceptability of the crime committed by the Nazis and their collaborators is ingrained in the minds of people, in their emotional make-up.

We share his view and believe that the education of the younger generation has a not insignificant role to play in this. Events to this end, including those within our Organization, make a useful contribution. A good example is the webinar by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in October 2020 presenting the study “Holocaust Memorial Days: An overview of remembrance and education in the OSCE region”. Its agenda included relevant provisions concerning our common commitments to combat racism, neo-Nazism and aggressive nationalism. The participants analysed the genesis of fascism and Nazism, which plunged the world into the depths of a world war. However, worrying trends in the OSCE area call for more to be done. We urge all the relevant structures to pay the utmost attention to this issue.

This is all the more pertinent, because representatives of other international organizations are already sounding the alarm. On 25 January, speaking at a Holocaust memorial service, United Nations Secretary-General Guterres said: “In some countries neo-Nazi ideas can be heard in debates between mainstream political parties. In others, neo-Nazis have infiltrated police and State security services.” He underscored that “[t]he COVID-19 pandemic has provided new areas for neo-Nazi activities.”

Against the backdrop of these words by Mr. Guterres and the relevant assessments by Ambassador Küchler that have just been made, it is surprising, to say the least, that in their joint press release of 27 January, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Ann Linde and ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci, talking about the Holocaust, completely ignored the question of who committed these atrocities. It is to be hoped that this is not an attempt to exonerate Nazi criminals.

Meanwhile, just like the rallies in the Third Reich, former Waffen-SS legionnaires, neo-Nazis and nationalists are marching through the streets of European cities. Anti-Semitic and racist slogans are proclaimed. Under the guise of State policy, a war has been declared on the monuments to the liberating soldiers. Memorials are being unveiled to those who fought for or collaborated with the members of the Axis. Streets and schools are being renamed in their honour.

Sadly, such events often take place in the countries occupied during the Second World War, whose heroic peoples made a significant contribution to our common victory. It is absolutely unacceptable to glorify those involved in the crimes of Nazism, including the whitewashing of members of the SS, which was designated a criminal organization by the Nuremberg Tribunal.

On the initiative of Russia and a number of co-sponsors, including many OSCE participating States, the United Nations General Assembly adopts a resolution every year against the glorification of Nazism, which also contains a provision on the unacceptability of Holocaust denial. Unfortunately, a number of countries abstain from voting, and two States vote year after year on spurious pretexts against condemning

those who exterminated the Jews and other peoples. We firmly believe that the approval of the document last year – on the 75th anniversary of victory in the Second World War, the founding of the United Nations and the establishment of the Nuremberg Tribunal – was particularly important for preserving the memory of the Holocaust and keeping up the worldwide fight against anti-Semitism.

Thank you for your attention.