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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1186th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 May 2018

On the situation of the Crimean Tatars in Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson,

In the context of efforts by the representatives of some countries to misinform, to put it mildly, about the situation of the Crimean Tatars in Russian Crimea, we should not forget how much we have had to rectify the situation after over two decades in which Crimean Tatars were discriminated against and had their rights trampled on when the peninsula was part of Ukraine.

I recall the conclusions of a number of international mechanisms which have assessed the situation in that time. For example, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has repeatedly pointed to the absence in Ukrainian legislation of measures prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic or national origins. It has noted the lack of access by Crimean Tatars to land and employment, the failure to resolve the problem of restitution and compensation for loss of housing and farmland, the lack of opportunity for education in their native language, acts of intolerance and abusive language directed at them, and the absence of political representation and access to the courts.

In 2013, the United Nations Human Rights Council noted the manifestations of intolerance and hatred towards Crimean Tatars and threats and acts of physical violence. Most of these crimes were committed by groups of radical Ukrainian nationalists.

In 2014, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed concern that Crimean Tatars were suffering discrimination and encountering difficulties in asserting their rights.

In her report of 16 August 2013, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities at the time, Ms. Astrid Thors, pointed to the absence of a legal framework for restoring the rights of formerly deported people and of an appropriate mechanism for legislating their return and mentioned the poor living conditions of Crimean Tatars. She stated that this policy could lead to ethnic tensions on the peninsula. The authorities in Kyiv have refused to recognize local self-governing Crimean Tatar bodies and have not enabled them to participate in elected decision-making bodies.

The Advisory Committee of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities noted with concern that the number of inter-ethnic and interreligious incidents, including the desecration of religious and cultural objects, was on the rise throughout Ukraine and particularly in Crimea.

In 2012, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Thomas Hammarberg, stressed the importance of adopting additional measures to ensure the full integration of Crimean Tatars. In a resolution in 2013, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers highlighted the drafting of legislation for the restoration and defence of the rights of national minorities as a problem demanding immediate resolution.

In those years, the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has repeatedly drawn attention to human rights violations in Crimea. In 2011, the Commission reported that neo-Nazi groups were becoming increasingly prominent in large industrial cities, and that some political parties and their representatives had made xenophobic statements with regard to Crimean Tatars.

In early 2014, the Committee of Experts of the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages noted the impossibility of using the Crimean Tatar language in Ukrainian criminal, civil or administrative proceedings. It also pointed out that the language of the Crimean Tatars was not used in Ukraine by executive and legislative bodies at the regional and local levels. The authorities in Kyiv did not give support to this language in economic and social affairs. Official acts were not translated into the Crimean Tatar language. Places, settlements and streets were not named according to their traditional Crimean Tatar designations, even as alternatives. The Committee of Experts also pointed to the insufficient support by the Government for Crimean Tatar media or any purposeful increase in their scope. These conclusions speak for themselves.

Today as well, the situation of Crimean Tatars living in Ukraine is invidious.

According to the May 2018 Bulletin of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, refugees from Crimea – around 30,000 people, half of them Crimean Tatars – suffer serious violations of their cultural, religious and language rights in Ukraine because of the position taken by the Ukrainian authorities, which are not interested in resolving their problems. In that regard, of course, we cannot agree with the designation in this Bulletin of the territory of the Republic of Crimea and the city with federal status of Sevastopol as being part of Ukraine.

The question of textbooks for Crimean Tatars language in Ukraine is critical, but the latest version of Ukrainian legislation on education in general offers slim prospects for the Crimean Tatar education system.

There are problems with the performance by Crimean Tatars of religious ceremonies or the provision of burial grounds. The authorities in a number of regions of Ukraine talk about the rights of Tatars but in fact do everything to sabotage them.

You are looking in the wrong place for the guilty parties, distinguished colleagues!

Thank you for your attention.