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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1157th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

28 September 2017

On the Law on Education in Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson,

Flagrant and massive violations of human rights continue in Ukraine. This has already become a kind of record in the OSCE area.

In recent days, the Ukrainian authorities have openly violated their commitments to protect the rights of national minorities. I am referring to the Law on Education adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in early September.

Despite the calls by the leaders of a number of countries and non-governmental organizations not to discriminate against the languages of national minorities, on 25 September the President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, signed the document all the same. In accordance with that law, there are tough restrictions on the use of national minority languages, with the prospect of them being removed from the country's education system completely by 2020. Thus, beginning in September 2020, that is in just three years' time, education in minority languages in Ukraine will be permitted only in preschool institutions and primary schools. Ultimately, this may lead to the closure of all of the educational establishments that provide teaching in any language other than Ukrainian.

The implementation of this law will result in the infringement of the linguistic rights of millions of citizens of Ukraine – Russians, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Greeks, Poles, Romanians and other speakers of regional and minority languages.

The authorities of Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Poland, Greece and Bulgaria have already expressed their serious concern about the law.

It is noteworthy that there has also been condemnation of the new law within the country, including on the part of the leadership in Lviv, a number of other regional councils and Ukrainian non-governmental organizations.

This step by the Ukrainian Government is an attempt by the Maidan authorities to carry out "linguistic cleansing" in the country's educational sphere, which directly

contravenes both its constitution, in particular Articles 10, 24 and 53, and its international commitments. In that connection, we should like to remind the Ukrainian representatives of the relevant provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the 1960 United Nations Declaration against Discrimination in Education, the 1986 Concluding Document of the Vienna Follow-up Meeting of the CSCE, the 1990 Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE and the 1991 Report of the CSCE Meeting of Experts on National Minorities.

It is worth citing some of these. For example, the Copenhagen Document clearly states that persons belonging to national minorities have the right “to establish and maintain their own educational ... institutions, organizations or associations... The participating States will endeavour to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities, notwithstanding the need to learn the official language or languages of the State concerned, have adequate opportunities for instruction of their mother tongue or in their mother tongue”.

In accordance with paragraph 63 of the 1986 Vienna Document the participating States undertook to “ensure access by all to the various types and levels of education without discrimination” as to language, among other things.

The new Ukrainian law is also at odds with The Hague (1996) and Ljubljana (2012) Recommendations of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, in accordance with which “States should respect the right of persons belonging to minorities to be taught their language or to receive instruction in this language ... especially in areas inhabited by them traditionally or in substantial numbers.”

In spite of the fact that there is no direct mention of the Russian language, or any other languages for that matter in the new law, it is clear that the main goal of the current Ukrainian legislators is to infringe as much as possible on the interests of the millions of Russian-speaking inhabitants of Ukraine, and to forcibly establish a mono-ethnic linguistic regime in a multinational State. This step is the latest manifestation of intolerance towards the members of various ethnic groups.

In continuing the previous policy in the linguistic field, the authorities in Kyiv are once again provoking the situation and recreating the reasons that in many ways became the starting point for the development of the conflict and the subsequent civil war in south-eastern Ukraine. The adoption of that law hinders the rapprochement of the parties to the internal Ukrainian conflict and makes the prospects of achieving a final settlement less likely. There is a clear unwillingness on the part of the Ukrainian Government to implement its own commitments under the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, paragraph 11 of which provides that, within their special status, certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions will have the right to linguistic self-determination.

We call on the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Austrian Chairmanship and the OSCE Secretary General to provide a fundamental assessment of the law in question and to finally get to grips with the situation regarding the rights of national minorities in Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention.