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PC.DEL/526/21
16 April 2021

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1309th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

15 April 2021

On International Roma Day

Madam Chairperson,

International Roma Day was celebrated on 8 April. On this day, Roma around the world traditionally observe a day of remembrance for the victims of fascism, where they commemorate the more than half a million Roma murdered in Auschwitz, Treblinka, Dachau, Mauthausen, Ravensbrück and other Nazi concentration camps.

We are unfortunately obliged to note that, in many European countries, Roma still find themselves socially isolated, subjected to discrimination and marginalization. Problems remain regarding the access of Roma to health care, employment and education. The socio-economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic have had a profound impact on the situation.

Against the backdrop of the major crisis gripping Europe and the rise in far-right and neo-Nazi sentiments, hate speech against Roma is intensifying. Such hate speech is based on prejudices and negative stereotypes about Roma, which is manifested increasingly in the form of open intolerance towards Roma in the statements by some politicians. At the same time, crimes committed by radicals frequently go unpunished.

In Russia, where about 205,000 Roma live, considerable attention is devoted to ensuring their rights. The unique Federal National and Cultural Autonomy of Russian Roma, which was established in 1999, and also one regional and six local national and cultural autonomies operate in the country. The Federal Autonomy's goal is to revive and preserve the identity of Russian Roma, their national culture and traditions, develop their language and education, promote peace and friendship between peoples and establish and maintain cultural ties with ethnic Roma in various countries of the world. There are problems, like everywhere else, of course. In order to address them, in 2019, the Government of the Russian Federation approved another comprehensive action plan for the socio-economic and ethnocultural development of Roma in the Russian Federation. One recent significant cultural event was the Roma under Russian Skies festival in September 2020, which was financially supported from the federal budget.

The OSCE has developed a solid and sufficient set of commitments to ensure the rights of Roma. The first is the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, adopted at the Maastricht Ministerial Council meeting in 2003, which aims to integrate them into all spheres of public life and eradicate discrimination against them. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues is meant to be keeping a close eye on the situation.

For all the importance of the problems faced by Roma, we should also not forget the need to combat manifestations of discrimination in relation to national, linguistic and religious minorities in general in the OSCE area. We urge participating States to take effective measures to protect them in accordance with international commitments.

Thank you for your attention.