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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1114th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 October 2016

On the constitutional referendum in Azerbaijan

Mr. Chairperson,

In connection with the question raised regarding the constitutional referendum held in Azerbaijan on 26 September, we should like to make a few comments.

The observers from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) recognized the referendum as being legitimate, transparent and democratic, and reflecting the will of the people of Azerbaijan. According to the CIS mission, “the results of the referendum confirm that the people support the changes made to the socio-political structure of Azerbaijan.”

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) did not observe the referendum. We regret that the Office did not consider it possible to carry out monitoring, despite the fact that the referendum featured (and still features) on the ODIHR “calendar of elections”.

It is by no means a “financial” issue, although they frequently try to convince us of this. Experience has shown that any decision by the ODIHR leadership is a question of the Office’s “interest” in that decision, and this decision taken by the ODIHR is political.

In that connection, we are compelled to renew our appeal to the ODIHR to adopt effective measures for the careful and transparent calculation of its expenses. We should like once again to remind the Office of the need to revise its “non-consensus” methodological framework and develop uniform election monitoring rules and modalities agreed upon within the OSCE.

Thank you for your attention.