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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1275th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

16 July 2020

**In response to the address by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden,
Mr. Robert Rydberg, on the priorities of the Swedish OSCE Chairmanship in 2021**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Rydberg,

We thank you for your detailed outline of the priorities of the forthcoming Swedish OSCE Chairmanship in 2021. Your country will soon assume leadership of a regional structure that is unique in its geographical scope and potential. How we all manage this valuable resource for safeguarding peace and stability will depend to a large extent on Sweden.

We expect the Swedish authorities to perform their function as Chairmanship with account taken of the interests of all participating States and not to be guided by the priorities of the European Union, which the EU representative hinted at so transparently.

In its time, a number of important decisions were adopted in your country's capital that are inscribed in the OSCE's history. We might recall the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe from 1984 to 1986, the results of which formed the basis for systematic work on reducing the military risk and threat of conflicts. The 1992 CSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Stockholm contributed to the institutional development of our Organization, in particular the establishment of the post of Secretary General.

We expect that our Swedish colleagues will rise to the occasion again in 2021. The OSCE faces a gargantuan task of halting the widespread degradation of the political climate in the Euro-Atlantic area and restoring multilateral co-operation between States on the basis of constructive collaboration. This task will require a maximum of diplomatic efforts. The lack of trust between participating States is combined with systemic imbalances in the work of the Organization's structures. This is vividly confirmed by the fact that in three days' time we will be without a Secretary General, a director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, a High Commissioner on National Minorities and a Representative on Freedom of the Media. The failure to agree on an extension of the mandates of the four heads of the executive structures, or at least some of them, testifies to the Organization's serious lack of credibility and underscores the long-overdue need for its reform.

The primary goal of the Chairmanship should be to restore normal dialogue in the OSCE in order to move away from confrontation. This is all the more necessary at a time when the politico-military situation in the Euro-Atlantic area is rapidly becoming less predictable and manageable. International arms control instruments are being dismantled. The NATO policy of the “containment” of Russia and the build-up of military infrastructure close to our borders continues to provoke the further growth of tensions and distrust.

The “European security order” is not an OSCE concept. The concept of comprehensive, co-operative, equal and indivisible security, which calls for co-operation and the formation of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, was adopted at the summit level. We trust that the Swedish Chairmanship will build on this work, closely following the decisions adopted by the highest bodies in our Organization.

We hope that even the most difficult issues will be discussed by the Swedish Chairmanship in a businesslike and conflict-free manner. This applies in particular to our communication in the Forum for Security Co-operation, which should not degenerate into an unproductive clash of views and approaches. The aim should be to identify points of common interest and to search painstakingly for compromise rather than entrenching discord and dividing lines.

Progress in resolving the internal crisis in Ukraine is urgently needed. There is a need to energize direct dialogue in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) in Minsk between the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk with regard both to the adoption of measures in support of the ceasefire regime and to the political, humanitarian and socio-economic spheres. We trust that the Swedish Chairmanship will guide the OSCE representatives in the TCG accordingly. We also expect the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine to keep a close watch on all information about casualties among the civilian population of Donbas and on observance of human rights throughout Ukraine, including the situation of national minorities and linguistic groups.

An intensification of the joint work in the “5+2” format is badly needed with a view to making dynamic progress again in the Transdniestrian settlement. We are prepared to assist the Chairmanship in promoting contacts between Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the framework of the Geneva International Discussions on Security and Stability in the Trans-Caucasus. We will continue mediation efforts in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. With regard to Kosovo, it is important for the Swedish Chairmanship to remain neutral, in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244.

We believe that the OSCE has developed a solid arsenal of mechanisms and instruments in the field of conflict settlement, which should be used without politicization and with account taken of the specifics of each crisis situation and the existing negotiation formats. The task of reviewing or improving these instruments is hardly relevant today.

We trust that the OSCE’s high profile in countering the entire range of new challenges and threats will be maintained. Combating the terrorist threat is of paramount importance. Additional efforts are required to form a wide international front against the spread of terrorist ideology, notably on the Internet. There is a need to block financial and material support for terrorists and to focus on the problem of foreign terrorist fighters. We view the fight against violent extremism solely in the context of counter-terrorism, with the leading role being played by national governments. Non-State actors can only carry out auxiliary functions and should not replace the efforts of specialized State structures.

We urge the future Chairmanship to give the most serious attention to combating drug trafficking, which poses a threat to the security of every single participating State. Our Organization has an agreed mandate in this area and can make a regional contribution to global anti-drug efforts.

We are prepared to continue looking for common ground with respect to the security of information and communication technologies. The confidence-building measures developed in the OSCE need to be implemented to reduce the risks of conflicts in this area, while avoiding the militarization of the information space, interference in the internal affairs of States and violations of their digital sovereignty.

We consider the practice of holding cross-cutting thematic conferences in the first basket to be extremely useful as an effective platform for sharing experience, developing consolidated approaches and forming a unifying agenda. We trust that these events will also lay the foundations for ministerial decisions.

More attention needs to be paid to economic and environmental questions and to achieving a balance between the three OSCE dimensions of security. We currently face the task of ensuring that the second basket is depoliticized and constructive.

We note the comprehensive approach by the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship to the issue of combating corruption. We see no reason to again make the theme of good governance and the fight against corruption the main priority of the 29th Economic and Environmental Forum in 2021. We need to focus instead on overcoming the economic consequences of the spread of the coronavirus. Attention should be paid to rehabilitating sectors affected by the pandemic, notably the tourism industry, and to the development of trade and transport connectivity, and the simplification of customs and border procedures in the interests of the alignment of integration processes in the OSCE area and the formation of a Greater Eurasian Partnership.

In order to work productively in the human dimension, thematic and geographical imbalances must be addressed. The work of the OSCE institutions should be transparent and accountable to the participating States, and carried out in accordance with their mandates. The institutional crisis being experienced in the third basket raises the long-overdue and urgent question of reforming this most politicized sphere of the OSCE. We call on the Swedish Chairmanship to agree in a timely manner and through established procedures on a package of events for 2021 and also to play an active role in setting the agenda for the Human Dimension Committee. Against the backdrop of the pandemic, which has seriously undermined the living standards of the people of many countries, the protection of social and economic rights must be given high priority.

Attention needs to be paid to the protection of traditional values, the rights of the child, the elimination of statelessness, and non-interference in private and family life. The fight against all forms of trafficking in human beings, notably for sexual exploitation and the removal of human organs, tissues and cells, must remain a priority.

Increased manifestations of racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance continue to threaten the security of our multi-ethnic societies. Emphasis should be placed on protecting the linguistic and educational rights of national minorities and other ethnic groups and combating discrimination on religious grounds, notably in co-operation with the relevant structures in the Council of Europe. We should not forget the task set at the 2014 OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Basel of preparing Ministerial Council Declarations on combating Christianophobia and Islamophobia. The 75th anniversary of victory in the Second World War emphasized the need to increase joint efforts in the fight against the glorification of Nazism, and against neo-Nazism and the falsification of history.

We note the intention of the Swedish Government to promote the theme of media freedom, which should include consideration of the safety of journalists and free access to information. Ensuring freedom of peaceful assembly also remains as relevant as ever. It is not the first year that Russia and other participating States have raised the question of developing a consensus methodology for election observation.

Collaboration with the OSCE Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation remains important. We advocate increasing dialogue on the basis of existing normative documents.

The success of the OSCE Chairmanship as an “honest broker” depends on full compliance with the mandate of the Chairmanship approved at the 2002 Ministerial Council meeting in Porto and with Permanent Council Decision No. 485 of 28 June 2002 regarding public statements on behalf of the Organization. It should work strictly on the basis of consensus and in the interests of the entire OSCE.

In conclusion, I should like to quote the words of the prominent Swedish politician Alva Myrdal: “We can hope that men will understand that the interest of all are the same, that hope lies in co-operation. We can then perhaps keep peace.”

We wish our Swedish colleagues all the best in their preparations for next year. Russia is always open to mutually respectful dialogue and co-operation on the whole range of OSCE issues.

Thank you for your attention.