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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1073rd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

29 October 2015

**In response to the addresses by Mr. Daniel Mitov,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, and Mr. Goran Svilanović,
Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council**

Mr. Chairperson,

We join in welcoming Mr. Daniel Mitov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, the country currently chairing the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), and Ambassador Goran Svilanović, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council, who we know well from his work in the not too distant past as Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.

We support the goals of the members of these associations for ensuring forward-looking regional economic development. We note the efforts to strengthen good-neighbourly relations in the interests of maintaining the security and stability of the countries of South-Eastern Europe. We share the goal of the members of these multilateral forums of ensuring sustainable economic development by stepping up co-operation across the region. We firmly believe that the practical results of such joint work could help in overcoming the region's current problems, especially in the socio-economic sphere.

We support the Serbian OSCE Chairmanship's priority of deepening regional co-operation. As a result of the efforts of the Organization's field presences in the Balkans, positive developments in the deepening of regional ties have already been noted this year in this area. This trend should be developed.

Russia is open to co-operation with the countries of the region in various areas, including on a bilateral basis. In that regard, our focus on such things as developing trade and economic relations, investment, humanitarian contacts, promoting joint energy projects, co-operation in countering organized crime and dealing with the consequences of natural and man-made disasters is completely in line with the priorities set by the Bulgarian SEECP Chairmanship and the goals of the Regional Cooperation Council.

We share the views expressed in statements today regarding the importance of ensuring human rights in the area of freedom of the media, freedom of speech and self-expression. Despite the claims about the “sacred nature” of these concepts, their real value in the OSCE area is unfortunately being devalued constantly.

The complex problem of refugees and internally displaced persons poses a serious challenge to the countries of South-Eastern Europe and the continent as a whole. There is no doubt that we need to redouble our efforts to counter radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism, including the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters.

We are convinced that regional associations in the OSCE area have to harmonize their activities if they are to be effective. In this regard, Russia unreservedly supports the expansion of productive and result-oriented links between the OSCE and other regional organizations.

In conclusion, I should like once again to underscore Russia’s openness to co-operation with the countries of South-Eastern Europe and our readiness to develop multifaceted collaboration – politico-military, economic and humanitarian – on the basis of equal rights and mutual respect for one another’s interests.

We wish our esteemed guests every success in their work.

Thank you for your attention.