

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1120th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

24 November 2016

**On the ratification of the Agreement between Russia and Abkhazia on a
Joint Group of Armed Forces**

Madam Chairperson,

The procedure provided for under Russian law for ratification of the Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Abkhazia on a Joint Group of Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Abkhazia was completed on 22 November. The document itself was signed last year in Moscow on 21 November 2015.

The Agreement and the Appendix to it set out the purpose and the procedures for the formation, deployment and engagement of the Joint Group of Armed Forces of the two countries, Russia and Abkhazia.

The Agreement provides an important supplement to the solid negotiated and legal basis already in existence consisting of around 100 bilateral documents at different levels for co-operation as equals between Russia and the independent sovereign Abkhazia. The basic foundation comprises the Treaty on Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance of 17 September 2008 and the Treaty on Alliance and Strategic Partnership of 24 November 2014.

We should like to draw attention to the strictly defensive tasks of the Joint Group. It is designed to provide an adequate response to armed attack and other threats to the military security of our countries. There is more than enough cause for this kind of concern.

The particular urgency for co-operation in this area is dictated by the continuing difficult regional situation, especially connected with the provocative actions by forces from outside the region. For example, the latest set of military manoeuvres by Georgia with NATO involving more than 250 military personnel from 13 countries finished on 20 November. This was the third multinational exercise of its type this year on the territory of Georgia. The armed forces of Georgia are conducting a systematic build-up in the scale and intensity of operational training with the active involvement of the Alliance command.

This activity is a cause of justified concern for Georgia's neighbours, namely Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The prospects for Georgia's membership of NATO voiced at the Bucharest Summit, which prompted the criminal aggression against Russian peacekeepers and the civilian population of Tskhinval in August 2008, is still fresh in our memory.

Thank you for your attention.