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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1236th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 July 2019

**In response to the address by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia,
Mr. Lasha Darsalia**

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome Mr. Lasha Darsalia to this OSCE Permanent Council meeting. Your visit to Vienna, Mr. Deputy Minister, confirms that Georgia attaches great importance to the work of the OSCE in normalizing the situation in the Trans-Caucasus.

The OSCE makes an important contribution to the work of the Geneva International Discussions on Security and Stability in the Trans-Caucasus. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this format. It is the only platform that brings together representatives of Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The dialogue in Geneva became the basis for a ten-year peaceful negotiation process without direct military confrontation and while maintaining relative stability at the borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia with Georgia. There is a particular demand for dialogue at times when the political situation is being exacerbated. We note the efforts of the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions, Rudolf Michalka, Cihan Sultanoğlu and Toivo Klaar, in organizing meetings.

Unfortunately, the latest round of the Geneva International Discussions on 2 and 3 July did not achieve significant progress in the normalization of relations between Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Georgia. It was once again not possible to reach an agreement on a statement on the non-use of force in the Trans-Caucasus between Abkhazia and South Ossetia, on the one hand, and Georgia, on the other. Let me remind you that this priority task is provided for in the agreements concluded between Dmitry Medvedev and Nicolas Sarkozy on 12 August 2008.

The effectiveness of the Geneva International Discussions depends on the focus of all parties on the result. Unfortunately, Georgia continues to initiate the adoption of propagandist documents at international platforms. At the same time, representatives of the authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia do not have the opportunity to defend their positions at these forums.

The resolution adopted at the session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Luxembourg from 4 to 8 July calling on Russia to withdraw its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was one-sided and biased. The document completely fails to take into account the existing realities in the region and the

policies of Georgia itself that have led to these realities. We consider it regrettable that the United Nations General Assembly adopted on 4 June the annual resolution on the “Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia”. The reaction of the authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, who declared that they are not ready under such conditions to engage in dialogue with the Georgian Government on this topic, is quite understandable. We urge Georgia to stop politicizing this most important humanitarian issue and to proceed to the substantive discussion of the issue in Geneva.

The discussion of security issues in Geneva is also being negatively influenced by the accelerated development of Georgia’s military co-operation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United States of America, which is becoming increasingly anti-Russian. The representatives of the alliance speak of the intention to turn Georgia into a foothold in the South Caucasus, which is not conducive to the achievement of long-term stability in the region.

Unfortunately, this time the atmosphere of the discussions held in Geneva was further clouded by the events in Tbilisi. We regard this as an act of provocation by the radicals with the aim of undermining Russian–Georgian relations. We strongly condemn the attacks on members of the Russian parliamentary delegation on 20 June. As a result of the radicals’ actions, the participants in the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy were forced to conclude their work ahead of schedule. On 7 July, unacceptable insulting remarks about the leadership of Russia were aired on the Georgian television channel “Rustavi 2”. We note the wave of indignation in Georgian society, as well as the position of the Georgian Government, which condemned this shameful stunt that tarnished the honour of Georgia.

The Russian Federation is interested in having good neighbourly relations with Georgia. We will consider lifting the ban on air travel if the threats to the safety of Russians are eliminated. The President of Russia rejected proposals to impose economic restrictions on Georgia. The reason behind this decision was the Russian leadership’s belief that ordinary citizens of Georgia should not be held responsible for the antics of radicals and individual politicians who incite anti-Russian rhetoric to achieve self-serving goals.

We hope that the leadership of Georgia will draw conclusions and take steps to bring the situation back to a peaceful course.

Thank you for your attention.