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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE
REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA TO
THE INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS
VIENNA

**Statement of the Delegation of Albania,
In response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo,
Ambassador Jan Braathu**

**As delivered by the Head of Mission, Ms. Ravesa Lleshi, at the
1132nd Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, 2 February 2017**

Mr. Chairperson,

The Albanian delegation wishes to join others in extending a warm welcome to the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Braathu, in his first appearance before the Permanent Council. Ambassador, we thank you and your team for the preparation and presentation of the report. My Delegation aligned with the statement of the European Union, but I would like to make a few remarks in a national capacity.

Yesterday, Kosovo became the 153rd member state of the Egmont Group, an acknowledgment of the great progress and steadfast commitment of the Kosovo government to anti-money laundering & counter-terrorist financing (AML/CTF), and another opportunity for Kosovo to up its contribution to our security. Indeed, the Government and institutions of Kosovo have energetically tackled challenges in the areas of corruption, organized crime, terrorism and radicalization, as also indicated in the Mission's report.

In spite of the fragility of the situation, progress has been made in the consolidation of democratic institutions, good governance, multi-ethnic and multi-religious coexistence. Many challenges still remain, but we trust OMIK to continue its support to the genuine efforts of the Government of Kosovo to build a stable, multi-ethnic, democratic society. OMIK continues to be a trusted, efficient and reliable partner to the Kosovo institutions, communities, and the international community on the ground. We commend your efforts to increase horizontal co-operation with other OSCE field operations as well. I would also like to express our appreciation for the Mission's continued engagement with women, youth, journalist and civil society, as crucial in your work on human rights, gender equality, electoral oversight, freedom of the media, anti-radicalization, tolerance, inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation.

Mr. Chairperson,

Albania strongly supports the EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, viewing progress in the normalization of relations between the two countries as critical for them and the Western Balkans as a whole. We are glad to see the Dialogue taking place at the highest levels, though regret the circumstances that lead to this elevation. A stable environment, conducive to overcoming the legacy of the past, demands genuine efforts towards reconciliation. And that requires responsible political leadership, in words and in deeds.

OMiK's report refers to President Hashim Thaçi's inter-ethnic reconciliation efforts, indeed in a demonstration of vision and courage. He met with relatives of Kosovo Serb missing persons to discuss ways to clarify their fate as a "prerequisite for justice and sincere reconciliation between people." The President has also requested judicial actors to shed light on the crimes committed during the 1998-1999 Kosovo conflict and the post-conflict period, a position reiterated in the President's address to the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo on 23 December 2016, and I quote: "A crime is a crime, against whomever it is directed to or whoever it is perpetrated by. And today I pray with sadness and I express once again my heartfelt sorrows for all the civilian victims of all communities, killed during and after the war." These are messages that the people of Kosovo, the region and we all need to listen to, especially at times when trust is diminishing, as Ambassador Braathu remarked.

Mr. Chairperson,

Albania particularly welcomes the Austrian Chairmanship's attention to the Western Balkans. Both Austria and the OSCE have a longstanding investment to the stability, security and prosperity of the region. We sincerely hope that Austria's traditional role as bridge-builder will prove fruitful, convinced that bridges, not walls, will lead to more confidence and more trust. We welcome the Chairmanship's intention to invest in inclusive and genuine dialogue, where good will and true commitments are translated into action, not hindered by artificial obstacles at every step of the way. And we strongly believe that this inclusive dialogue should be extended to Kosovo, allowing the Kosovar authorities to hear from the participating States about their country and about OMiK's activities. Albania looks forward to the day when Kosovo will be present in the Permanent Council as an OSCE participating State. Until that day, I will reiterate our position that we should not discuss about Kosovo, without Kosovo.

I wish to thank again Ambassador Braathu and his dedicated team for the report and today's presentation, and wish them every success in their very important work. You may count on our delegation's full support.

I thank you.