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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1276th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 July 2020

In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank the distinguished Ambassador Clemens Koja for his comprehensive report.

We join in congratulating North Macedonia on its parliamentary elections, which ended on 15 July. We note that the voting took place in a calm environment and with quite a high voter turnout, given the current unfavourable epidemiological conditions. We hope that the results of the election campaign will allow the formation of a government at all levels of authority in the near future. We confirm Russia's interest in building harmonious relations with North Macedonia in areas of mutual interest.

The report presented by the Head of the OSCE Mission demonstrates the high demand for assistance to the host authorities by the field presence on a wide range of issues, relating primarily to programmes to support the promotion of inter-ethnic harmony and equal rights of ethnic communities in line with the Ohrid Framework Agreement. We note the "high profile" of the OSCE Mission in improving the capacity of national law enforcement agencies to counter transnational threats common to the Western Balkans, notably international organized crime, trafficking in human beings and arms trafficking. We also note the close attention paid by the authorities in Skopje to the expert assessments by the OSCE Mission concerning reform of the public administration system and improvement in the efficiency of criminal procedures and judicial proceedings. The tasks set forth in the field presence's mandate to monitor the situation in the host country with a focus on maintaining inter-ethnic stability remain important.

We are pleased to note that the leadership of the OSCE Mission was able to quickly adapt its activities to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are confident that the lessons learned will help to improve the overall effectiveness of OSCE field activities. We believe that in the long term, moving selected planned training activities online across the Organization will significantly reduce unnecessary operational costs.

We trust that the OSCE Mission will continue to work in strict compliance with the provisions of its mandate and other decisions of the OSCE decision-making bodies.

In conclusion, we should like to wish you, Ambassador Koja, and the Mission team further success in your work.

Thank you for your attention.