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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1248th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

21 November 2019

In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank the distinguished Ambassador Bernd Borchardt for his detailed report.

Without any exaggeration, the OSCE has made a significant contribution to the democratic reforms in Albania during the transition period, helping the country to overcome major internal crises and putting it on the path of development. In this regard, it is very symbolic that from 1 January Albania will assume the Chairmanship of the OSCE. We are confident that Albania can overcome the internal political contradictions noted in the report on the basis of compromise by the main political forces. We trust that the current crises will not have an impact on the effectiveness of the Albanian Chairmanship.

The review presented by the distinguished Ambassador Borchardt indicates that the authorities are interested in continuing to receive assistance in national capacity-building in a wide range of areas.

We share the Presence's focus on consistently supporting the development of parliamentarianism, the reform of the judicial system, the improvement of electoral legislation and media regulation. Such reforms are of great importance for the host State irrespective of its European integration tasks, which do not fall within the OSCE's area of responsibility.

We should like to highlight the efforts of the Presence to strengthen the capacities of the Albanian law enforcement authorities, including the border police, in countering transnational threats, with a focus on combating organized crime, drug trafficking, corruption and cybercrime. We note the increase in the Presence's assistance in combating trafficking in human beings and labour exploitation of children. We expect due attention to be given to trafficking in human organs.

We hope that the Presence's work will continue in strict accordance with the provisions of its mandate and the decisions of the OSCE decision-making bodies. The Presence's staff should take a balanced approach and maintain working contacts with the authorities at all levels.

In conclusion, we should like to wish the distinguished Ambassador Borchardt and all the staff of the field presence every success. We trust that the Presence's activities will contribute to the harmonious development of Albania and the Balkan region as a whole.

Thank you for your attention.