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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1136th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

9 March 2017

On the situation in Macedonia

Mr. Chairperson,

We note with concern that the political crisis in Macedonia is deepening. External interference in Macedonia's internal affairs is taking more and more outrageous forms, including open appeals at the meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council to the President of an independent country to reconsider his decision.

On 11 December 2016, the citizens of Macedonia, in the snap parliamentary elections held at the insistence of the European Union and the United States of America, voted for the ruling party, which received the majority of votes. The opposition, openly supported by external forces, was defeated despite all of the manipulations. Now, the Albanian minority is trying to bring those politicians who lost the election to power in Skopje.

Unprecedented pressure is being exerted on the President of Macedonia, Gjorge Ivanov, through the prospect of European integration in an attempt to transfer the Prime Minister's mandate to the opposition who agreed to the "Tirana platform" ultimatum. A document put together in the office of the Prime Minister of the neighbouring State, under the map of so-called Greater Albania, implies the federalization of Macedonia, the revision of the architecture of power and even of State symbols and, in fact, leads to the undermining of the constitutional foundations and ultimately to the disintegration of this country. It is no coincidence that the so-called leader of the self-proclaimed State of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, has also become one of the supporters of this policy and unequivocally called on Macedonian Albanians "to take their rights into their own hands". We consider such an irresponsible policy extremely dangerous, fraught not only with the destruction of Macedonian statehood, but also with the destabilization of the Balkans as a whole.

It is necessary to stop external interference in the internal affairs of Macedonia and to respect the right of Macedonian citizens to independently decide their own destiny in accordance with the fundamental democratic principles.

Thank you for your attention.