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**STATEMENT BY MR. DMITRY BALAKIN,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1232nd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 June 2019

On the parliamentary election in South Ossetia

Mr. Chairperson,

In connection with the topic raised by the representatives of Georgia and a number of colleagues, we should like to confirm that we are also far from indifferent to the development of democratic processes in a neighbouring State. At the same time, it would be more useful to discuss the parliamentary election in the Republic of South Ossetia in the presence of its official representatives.

Russia welcomes the successful holding of the parliamentary election in the friendly State of South Ossetia on 9 June. The electoral campaign marked a new and important step towards nation-building and the gradual development of parliamentarianism, democratic institutions and civil society in this independent republic.

In contrast to the scandalous presidential election campaign in Georgia last autumn, the election to the parliament of South Ossetia took place under conditions of internal political stability with no serious violations and was notable for the high level of active participation by the electorate. According to preliminary data from the Central Election Commission of the Republic of South Ossetia, the total voter turnout exceeded 65 per cent. Representatives of foreign countries participating in the international election observation confirmed that the campaign complied with high electoral standards and democratic principles.

On 11 June, the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions on the Trans-Caucasus were informed of the results of the campaign during the consultations in Tskhinval in anticipation of the next round of discussions in Geneva on 2 and 3 July. We trust that the atmosphere of internal political stability in South Ossetia will serve as an important additional factor contributing to the effectiveness of the direct dialogue by representatives of the authorities in Sukhum, Tbilisi and Tskhinval in the Geneva International Discussions.

We find it regrettable that the Georgian representatives are attempting to exploit the truly complex humanitarian problem of refugees and internally displaced persons for propaganda purposes. I refer, among other things, to the annual resolution on this subject adopted on 4 June by the United Nations General Assembly. The document, as in the past, is purely political and shows no real concern for the fate of persons

in vulnerable situations. Once again, the representatives of the authorities in Sukhum and Tskhinval were given no opportunity to present their view of the problem.

We urge our colleagues to reflect on the consequences of supporting such initiatives. So far, such resolutions have only had a damaging effect on practical steps to resolve the humanitarian problems in the Trans-Caucasus. The nominal diplomatic “victory” has always been a pyrrhic one both for Georgia itself and for the inhabitants of the Trans-Caucasus. It is important to recall that this initiative has a serious negative impact on the Geneva International Discussions, undermines the efforts of the Co-Chairs to improve the effectiveness of the format, and serves as an artificial barrier to the joint work of Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia to address the current challenges to the well-being of the population.

We believe that it would be appropriate to seek to normalize relations between the three States and to devise habitual methods of resolving questions, which are equally critical for all of them, in a constructive manner. This is how to show real responsibility towards people who find themselves living in difficult circumstances.

Thank you for your attention.