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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1015th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 September 2014

In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo

Mr. Chairperson,

We are happy to welcome Ambassador Jean-Claude Schlumberger, Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, to this meeting of the Permanent Council. We highly appreciate the work of this field presence. We trust that it will continue to act in a status-neutral manner in strict compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1224, which remains binding for all as the international legal basis for a Kosovo settlement.

We regard the dialogue between Belgrade and Priština at a high political level under the aegis of the European Union as an effective instrument for the peaceful political resolution of contentious issues, the creation of the prerequisites for improving the living conditions of the people of Kosovo and stabilizing the situation in the Balkans as a whole. Unfortunately, no substantive progress has been made this year. We are puzzled by the obstacles to the creation of a Community of Serb Municipalities in Kosovo and its endowment with real powers, particularly in the light of calls by some politicians in the territory for reconsideration of the outcome of talks completed between Belgrade and Priština.

The situation in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija remains fragile, and the continued incidents with an inter-ethnic background give rise to serious concern. In spite of the great and multifaceted work by the Mission, the difficulties experienced every day by the population of the territory, in particular the non-Albanian communities in the enclaves, have not disappeared. The extent of the problems is eloquently demonstrated today in Ambassador Schlumberger's report.

We welcome the Mission's work in enhancing the capabilities of the Kosovo police to conduct investigations and duly classify similar incidents. We call for the creation as rapidly as possible of a special court for war crimes in Kosovo so that it can give legal consideration to the results of the work of the European Union Special Investigative Task Force. The provisional results of the investigation published this summer provide convincing evidence of the serious and systematic crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army against members of communities in the territory.

The Mission should continue to focus its attention on safeguarding the rights of non-Albanian communities, particularly the restoration of property rights, freedom of movement and religion, ensuring their safety, and non-discrimination with regard to language policies, education, health care, employment and the media. The necessary conditions for the return of over 200,000 Serbian internally displaced persons to the territory have still not been achieved. As was rightly pointed out in the report, the Kosovan institutions need to take effective and immediate steps in this regard.

The problem of threats to Serbian religious and cultural heritage sites has not been removed. We welcome the contribution by the Mission to safeguarding their security, in particular the report drafted by the presence on protection of cultural heritage sites in the territory and participation in monitoring the maintenance of the Special Protection Zones around monuments and in dealing with incidents.

There is also cause for concern at the crime situation in Kosovo, the high level of corruption and illicit trafficking in arms and narcotics. There is a need for thorough investigation of cases of trafficking in human organs. The OSCE Mission, like other international presences, should pay particular attention to the spread of radical and extremist ideas, which exacerbates the already difficult situation in Kosovo. In particular, there is a need for information about the presence of groups connected with Al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations and the recruitment of militants to fight in Syria and Iraq.

We note the Mission's collaboration in the organization of electoral campaigns in the territory, in particular the repeat municipal elections in Mitrovica and the voting in the election of deputies to the National Assembly of Serbia. We welcome the constructive contribution to its conduct by Belgrade.

In conclusion, we should like once again to emphasize that a resolution of the Kosovo question can be achieved only with full and equal dialogue between Belgrade and Priština. We are confident that the international community, including the OSCE, will not slacken off its attention to the Kosovo settlement process.

Today's discussion in the Permanent Council once again makes clear the need for strengthening rather than reducing the activities of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, particularly with regard to the rule of law, including police training to deal with organized crime and transnational threats and challenges.

We wish Ambassador Schlumberger and his team further success in their difficult work.

Thank you for your attention.