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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1115th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 October 2016

**Regarding the outcome of the latest round of the
Geneva International Discussions on the Trans-Caucasus**

Mr. Chairperson,

We should also like to share our thoughts on the latest round of international discussions on the Trans-Caucasus, which took place in Geneva on 4 and 5 October.

As ever, the talks were not easy, but they took place on the whole in a businesslike atmosphere. The participants, including representatives of the European Union Monitoring Mission, confirmed that the situation on Georgia's borders with Abkhazia and South Ossetia remains quiet and stable. The incidents are basically of an administrative nature, frequently connected with a lack of information on the part of the local population about exactly where the boundary line runs. This problem could be solved by marking the border properly, something that authorities in Tbilisi stubbornly refuse to do, so that those in Sukhum and Tskhinval are forced to carry out this work unilaterally.

The checkpoints on Georgia's borders with Abkhazia and South Ossetia are handling the tasks entrusted to them adequately and ensure the cross-border movement of persons and vehicles. This is confirmed by the statistics at the checkpoints: since the previous round of discussions, over 380,000 people and 10,000 vehicles have crossed the border with Abkhazia and over 75,000 people and 17,000 vehicles the border with South Ossetia.

The regular meetings of the Joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRM) at the Georgian-South Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhazian borders and the use of hotlines continue to make a useful contribution to ensuring stability in the border regions of the three States. Ergneti has seen its 70th meeting, and the fourth meeting since the resumption of work in this format has taken place in Gal. Progress has been made in handling the problems that arise.

In our opinion, the Abkhazian representatives have provided the necessary explanations in the so-called "Otkhozoria affair", which is also being discussed by them

directly with Georgia in the IPRM format. We believe that it would be counter-productive to politicize this subject in the OSCE.

We note the efforts by the co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions to organize serious discussion of a draft joint statement by participants in the discussions on the non-use of force as an interim solution on the way to the conclusion of bilateral agreements between Abkhazia and South Ossetia on the one hand and Georgia on the other. We should like to reiterate that we share the concern of Abkhazia and South Ossetia at the increasingly frequent military exercises by NATO in Georgia, the scale of which and the involvement of NATO armed forces and heavy weapons are growing year by year. The increasing military activity by Georgia once again highlights the pressing need for suitable legally binding agreements. Unfortunately, on this occasion no progress was made on this point either, because of the unwillingness of the Georgian representatives to compromise.

Dialogue in Working Group II on humanitarian issues continues. The participants in the Geneva International Discussions emphasized their willingness to continue to seek ways of resolving the issues of safeguarding the cultural heritage, including the exchange of archives, the search for missing persons and freedom of movement.

Work in Geneva on the question of refugees has practically come to a standstill because of Georgia's unconstructive position. The delegations of the Republic of Abkhazia, the Russian Federation and the Republic of South Ossetia voiced protest at the biased statement by Georgia in the United Nations Human Rights Council and the proposal to organize external monitoring in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, over which Georgia has for a long time had no sovereignty. During their recent travels in the region and their talks in Geneva, the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions were able to confirm the groundlessness of Georgian assertions, as exemplified by the welfare programmes in place in the republics.

Thank you for your attention.