

PC.DEL/365/18
23 March 2018

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1180th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

22 March 2018

**On violations of international law and OSCE principles with regard to the
1999 bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia**

Mr. Chairperson,

We propose looking back at the root causes of the current Euro-Atlantic security crisis. They have their origins in the selective application and twisted interpretation of international legal norms and OSCE principles. The use of “double standards” in international relations has sapped trust between States. The force of law has given way to the right of force.

In this context, one of the most tragic dates in recent European history was 24 March 1999, when a group of OSCE participating States, who were also members of the NATO military alliance, acted of their own accord, without the United Nations Security Council’s approval, and resorted to open armed aggression against another sovereign State and OSCE participating State – the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This was an unconcealed attempt to redraw Europe’s borders using military force and to achieve the violent overthrow of an independent State’s government. It was a gross violation of the principles of non-intervention in internal affairs, non-use of force, and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Over 78 days of the barbaric bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, NATO forces used a total of 2,300 missiles and dropped 14,000 bombs. “Collateral damage” of this NATO action left more than 2,000 civilians dead, including children, and thousands of wounded and missing. Precision strikes destroyed civilian infrastructure – more than 1,500 populated areas, factories, bridges, transport hubs, power stations and electricity transmission lines, and social and educational facilities. Destruction of chemical plants contaminated huge swathes of the country. There was widespread use of ammunition containing enriched uranium, as a result of which civilians continue to be affected by cancer to this day. What was the logic for destroying the Varadin bridge in Novi Sad, which in all its history was destroyed twice by invaders – by the Nazis in 1944 and by the NATO forces in 1999.

NATO support for the Kosovo Liberation Army, an organization which shortly before had been considered a terrorist group in the West, led to even greater ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, resulting in more than 200,000 Serbs being driven from the region.

Recognition of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence by a number of OSCE participating States was a gross violation of international law, the Helsinki Final Act and the provisions of UN Security Council resolution 1244.

Confident in the Western countries' unconditional support, the authorities in Priština obstruct a settlement of the Kosovo conflict based on compromise with Serbia. They openly sabotage already approved decisions reached through European Union mediation. Since 2015, they have not been fulfilling their obligation to establish the Community of Serb Municipalities. They are blocking the establishment of the Special Chambers to judge the crimes of the Kosovo Liberation Army and the outrageous cases of removal of human organs for sale in Europe. They are not letting thousands of Serbs driven from the region return to their homes, and they create an intolerable environment in Kosovo, forcing those who remain to leave.

Mr. Chairperson,

With its aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia NATO demonstrated its military might. NATO representatives went on to assert that the alliance's expansion would supposedly bring stability. We can assure you that we learned this lesson very well.

We will never forget how the pretext for aggression was fabricated. Regrettably, a representative of our Organization, former OSCE Head of Mission William Walker, from the United States of America, was implicated in this shameful act. It was he who helped to ensure that Western media spread the "fake news" about the mass murder of civilians in the village of Račak. A subsequent investigation by Finnish experts (incidentally, the materials have yet to be published in full) concluded that this was a planned provocation. The bodies discovered in Račak belonged not to civilians but to participants in armed formations. It is symbolic that Kosovo appreciated the American diplomat's lie and in January 2017 erected a monument to William Walker, who is still alive and continues to actively promote the idea of a union between Kosovo and Albania.

This disgraceful incident joins the ranks of "Colin Powell's test tubes" in 2003, which cost the Iraqi people hundreds of thousands of victims.

Today too, we see the practice of false accusations and whipping up militaristic hysteria, threatening peace in Europe and around the world. We truly have come right to the edge of the abyss, but we can still step back from the brink. We know the recipe for achieving this – honest work together on the basis of common interests, chief of which is preserving peace on this continent.

Thank you for your attention.