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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1350th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 January 2022

**On the presentation of the priorities of the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland Zbigniew Rau**

Mr. Chairperson-in-Office,

We thank you for your detailed presentation of the programme of the Polish OSCE Chairmanship for the current year. We concur with the main premise that the work of our Organization must be based on international law and the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act, including full implementation of the principle of the indivisibility of security. The difficult politico-military situation in the Euro-Atlantic area, which is exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, requires our Organization to take urgent and effective steps to de-escalate tensions and draw up a positive agenda. To this end, work on enhancing the effectiveness of the OSCE also needs to continue.

The simmering but potentially explosive internal Ukrainian conflict calls for immediate efforts to resolve it. Attempts to promote confrontational politicized approaches, hiding behind the opinion of a group of States far removed from Donbas in every sense, only lead to a deterioration of the situation and bring it to a standstill. This was clearly demonstrated last year: amidst the lack of progress in the political settlement process, the number of ceasefire violations in Donbas increased, with more casualties, destruction and suffering among the civilian population.

This time, we expect the Chairmanship to take a constructive view of the situation in line with the letter and the spirit of United Nations Security Council resolution 2202 of 17 February 2015, which endorsed the Minsk Package of Measures. Direct dialogue between the parties to the conflict in eastern Ukraine – the representatives of the Ukrainian Government and of the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk – needs to be promoted. Every effort should be made to resume face-to-face meetings of the Trilateral Contact Group as soon as possible and get the shameful socio-economic blockade of Donbas lifted, especially in the context of the coronavirus pandemic.

We expect the Polish Chairmanship to insist on the impartial work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, and the Mission itself to implement in good faith all aspects of its mandate, refraining from the politicization of its activities or the “retouching” of facts that are inconvenient for the Ukrainian

Government. This is particularly relevant in the light of the increasing discrimination against the non-Ukrainian-speaking population across the country.

We trust that our Organization, within the framework of the established formats, will be able to make its contribution to the settlement of the persisting conflicts between the Trans-Caucasian States – Azerbaijan and Armenia, and Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia – and will also help to get the negotiations in the “5+2” format on Transdniestria moving again. A status-neutral approach should be firmly adhered to in the work in the Balkans.

We consider countering transnational threats to be a key unifying element in the first “basket”. The focus should be exclusively on those issues that pose a direct threat to the lives and health of our citizens, without unduly highlighting the gender and human rights aspects. The relevant State structures should have the leading role in this, while the activities of non-State actors, including civil society and business, are only of a subsidiary nature.

It is our understanding that the Polish Chairmanship will maintain the Organization’s high counter-terrorism profile, in particular by holding cross-cutting thematic events. The focus should remain on combating terrorist ideology, particularly on the Internet, sources of financing of terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters.

We are prepared to carry on looking for common ground with respect to the security of information and communication technologies (ICT). The confidence-building measures developed in the OSCE to reduce the risk of conflicts arising in this area need to be implemented, so as to prevent militarization of the information space, interference in the internal affairs of States and violations of their digital sovereignty. We consider specialized Chairmanship conferences on ICT security to be a useful practice.

We suggest that the Chairmanship give due attention to the issue of combating drug trafficking. Unfortunately, this area has undeservedly been put on the back burner in recent years. We firmly believe the OSCE has the strong mandate, expertise and closely aligned co-operation with other relevant international organizations necessary to counter this phenomenon effectively.

We welcome the decision of the Polish Chairmanship to devote the events of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum in its 30th anniversary year to the theme of sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to consolidate the constructive, depoliticized nature of the work in the second dimension. We are ready to actively share Russian best practices in overcoming the negative impact of the pandemic.

The focus should be on revitalizing the hardest-hit sectors, in particular the tourism industry. Due attention should also be paid to the development of trade and transport connectivity and the simplification of customs and border procedures in the interests of aligning integration processes in the OSCE area and forming a Greater Eurasian Partnership. As in the past, we are counting on the expert support of the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.

The need to reform the human dimension and rectify thematic and geographical imbalances is long overdue. The executive structures must adhere strictly to their mandates and the instructions from the decision-making bodies and also be accountable to the participating States.

The past year has confirmed that the electoral methodology of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights remains politicized and inconsistent. There is no gold standard. In this regard, there is a need to develop together common principles for election observation in the OSCE’s area of responsibility.

We call on the Polish Chairmanship to agree in good time on a “package” of human dimension events for 2022. The threat of neo-Nazism requires separate consideration and should be clearly reflected in the agenda of human dimension events, above all the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting.

Social and economic rights, protecting the linguistic and educational rights of national minorities and communities, and combating discrimination on religious grounds cannot be ignored. The task set by the OSCE Ministerial Council in Basel in 2014 to elaborate Ministerial Council declarations on combating Christianophobia and Islamophobia needs to finally be fulfilled.

Other important topics include children’s rights, the situation of migrants, the elimination of statelessness, non-interference in private and family life, discrimination in sport and combating trafficking in human beings, including trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and the removal of human organs, tissues and cells.

In the context of the highly relevant topic at present of freedom of expression, special attention needs to be paid to illegitimate censorship of the information space by private IT companies. It seems there is a long-overdue need to launch an open dialogue on the development of clear rules for their work on the global web.

As always, the key to a successful Chairmanship programme as an honest broker is clear adherence to the OSCE’s consensus approaches strictly within the framework of the 2002 Porto Ministerial Council decision on the role of the Chairmanship-in-Office and the 2002 Permanent Council Decision No. 485 on OSCE statements and public information.

The Russian Federation stands ready to provide all the necessary support to the Polish Chairmanship in strengthening the OSCE and realizing its contribution to building a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community.

We hope that you personally, esteemed Minister, and the entire Polish Chairmanship team can work effectively in this responsible function in the coming year.

Thank you for your attention.