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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1176th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 February 2018

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful to the distinguished Ambassador Jan Braathu for his detailed report.

The Russian position on Kosovo remains unchanged and is based on the international legal framework set forth in United Nations Security Council resolution 1244. According to paragraph 1 of and annex 1 to this resolution, a political solution to the Kosovo crisis should be achieved in the framework of a “political process ... taking full account of ... the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia” and now of Serbia as a successor State. We shall support a mutually acceptable solution achieved in dialogue between the authorities in Belgrade and Priština.

The analysis presented confirms the continued existence in this Serbian territory of deep-seated problems calling for the constant attention of the international community, with a leading role being played by the UN Security Council.

The formation of a new so-called “government” has not helped to overcome the impasse in the resolution of these problems. On the contrary, the new Kosovo authorities have begun with an attempt to dismantle agreements already reached with the Government in Belgrade with the mediation of the European Union.

Members of the Kosovo Assembly, among whom are a number of former armed militants, have been endeavouring to challenge the Specialist Chambers established to investigate the crimes of the Kosovo Liberation Army. It is not clear today when the institution will start work or whether it will even come up with any specific charges. The Specialist Chambers should commence work promptly and with maximum transparency. All of those guilty of serious crimes should be brought to justice and receive appropriate punishment, regardless of the posts currently occupied by them. This work cannot be tied to any additional measures.

For the fifth year, the authorities in Priština are sabotaging a key agreement on the creation of a Community of Serb Municipalities in Kosovo. The mediating role of the EU is called into doubt as a result, and also its objectivity and impartiality.

We note the efforts of the OSCE Mission to promote inter-ethnic reconciliation and mutual respect in Kosovo and to create a viable multi-ethnic society in the territory, in which the rights of all citizens are respected in full and equal measure. We appreciate its proactive assistance in resolving the problems of those who have ventured to return to their homes, its work aimed at safeguarding the language rights of the non-Albanian population, and its mediation in the protection of objects relating to the Serbian cultural and religious heritage.

There is a need for a systemic approach by the OSCE to safeguarding the rights of the non-Albanian minority in the territory, in particular through a detailed analysis of the compliance of Kosovo's legislation with the aim of creating genuine ethnic and confessional equality in the territory. We look forward to corresponding information from the Mission.

The OSCE Mission confirms the worrying drop in the number of internally displaced persons returning, particularly those affected by the mass expulsion of Serbs. In two decades, only 148 from over 200,000 persons have returned to Kosovo. The reasons for this are to be found in the systemic problems with the security of the non-Albanian population, the continuing attacks on the homes and property of Kosovo Serbs, and cases of arson and vandalism.

The assassination of Oliver Ivanović confirmed the disastrously low level of security and law enforcement in Kosovo, the particular vulnerability of Serbian communities and the absence of effective mechanisms for responding to challenges of this nature. We support the demand by the authorities in Belgrade for a full investigation by international bodies in Kosovo into the assassination of Mr. Ivanović with the provision of access to it for competent Serbian bodies. The possibility for Serbian police to be stationed in the territory is provided for specifically in UN Security Council resolution 1244. The EU Rule of Law Mission, which has distanced itself from the investigation, bears particular responsibility.

The harassment of the Serbian Orthodox Church continues. The Kosovo Albanians are attempting to create an economic blockade and to deprive it of its assets and means for survival. The situation of Dečani Monastery, which is included in the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger, remains worrying. The local authorities are ignoring the decision of bodies in Kosovo, including the court of law, regarding the Monastery's ownership of the surrounding land. Kosovo Albanian radicals have once again blockaded the convent in Đakovica. As a result, the police were obliged to supply the nuns with provisions.

We are counting on the OSCE Mission to oppose the radical nationalism of the Kosovo Albanians. For now, the authorities in Kosovo are reliant on the most reactionary forces, particularly the infamous Kosovo Liberation Army. The so-called "government" is earmarking funds from the budget to assist the families of those convicted of the attack on police officers in Kumanovo, Macedonia, in 2015.

The condoning of radicals threatens to pose new problems both for Serbian Kosovo and for neighbouring States. This is part of the wider problem of the incitement of radical nationalism in the OSCE area, which is threatening the stability of the continent.

Thank you for your attention.