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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1387th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 September 2022

**On the presentation of
the priorities of North Macedonia's OSCE Chairmanship in 2023**

Mr. Chairperson,
Minister,

We thank you for your detailed outline of the priorities of North Macedonia's forthcoming OSCE Chairmanship, though, to be honest, the emotionalism of your statement was frankly disappointing.

We are obliged to note that our Organization is once again going through a profound crisis of identity – possibly one of the most acute in its history. In this context we should like to remind you that the CSCE/OSCE was created over several decades through the intensive efforts of more than one generation of participating States. The stated “matrix” of its activities – dialogue, no matter how difficult it may be, and co-operation in the interests of the equal and indivisible security of all countries without exception – has been enshrined in many documents, not least those adopted at the highest level. And no Chairmanship is entitled to change the parameters for the functioning of the Organization, its institutions and instruments to advance personal ambitions and the interests of individual groups and alliances.

What is at stake is the future of the OSCE, which at the current juncture marked by the Polish Chairmanship's destructive policies has been pushed to the brink of its existence. The OSCE, thanks in considerable measure to the authorities in Warsaw, finds itself today on the sidelines of world politics. It is not mentioned in the context of any key problem, whether relating to energy, climate or food supply. In Ukraine the Organization was unsuccessful, but neither is it making any noticeable attempts to prevent an escalation of the crisis in the Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija. It is a matter of the utmost urgency: either we all try to initiate a professional conversation so as to restore trust and we stop stoking ruinous confrontation, or an unenviable fate awaits the Organization.

We would remind you that the fundamental guiding principles of the work of the Chairmanship-in-Office are regulated by a Ministerial Council decision adopted in Porto in 2002, which tasks the Chairmanship with ensuring “that its actions are not inconsistent with positions agreed by all the participating States and that the whole spectrum of opinions of participating States is taken into account” and with ensuring “effective and continuous working contacts with other international organizations and

institutions”. Nor should one forget about Permanent Council Decision No. 485 of 2002 on public statements made on behalf of the Organization, in which it is likewise laid down that “the Chairman-in-Office or his representative is expected to take into account the entire spectrum of expressed opinions.” Incidentally, in that very same document it is said that “formal OSCE positions are expressed in decisions, statements and documents adopted by the decision-making bodies on the basis of consensus.”

We are deliberately speaking about this today in such a forthright manner in view of how these decisions have been completely ignored by the Polish Chairmanship.

Minister,

We expect North Macedonia as the holder of the Chairmanship to create the conditions for balanced work and to prevent the authority of the OSCE executive structures from being eroded: they must not become a tool for settling political scores under the pretext of the situation in Ukraine. The one-sided attention that the executive structures are paying to Ukrainian topics is unacceptable, as is their selective interpretation of their mandates and, in some cases, their overt political bias. They must not turn a blind eye to the Kyiv regime’s blatant violations of OSCE principles and commitments, including those pertaining to human rights.

Unfortunately, our Organization missed a unique opportunity to play a part in facilitating a political settlement of the Ukrainian conflict through the implementation of the Minsk agreements, as had been approved by the United Nations Security Council in resolution 2202. Russia was forced to intervene in order to stop the bloodshed and the annihilation of the civilian population of Donbas, and to remove real threats to its national security on its borders in full accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. The continuation of their unrestrained military support for the Ukrainian Government by the NATO and EU countries is a reckless path that is multiplying the suffering of Ukraine’s civilians and could well lead to catastrophic consequences not merely for that country but also on a broader regional scale.

There continues to be a dangerous paralysis in other conflict zones as well, where the OSCE is duty-bound to use its mediating capacity and to actively engage in the prevention of potential crises. Owing to the Polish Chairmanship’s inability to develop response measures, the momentum of the Geneva Discussions on Security in the Trans-Caucasus has stalled, and no headway is being made in the Transdnistrian settlement process either, along with several other areas.

Minister,

I shall dwell briefly on how Russia envisages the main parameters of work in the three dimensions.

We would of course like to hope that North Macedonia will succeed in restoring the high profile that the OSCE has traditionally enjoyed when it comes to countering the full range of new challenges and threats, without an inappropriate overemphasis on gender and human rights aspects.

Combating the terrorist threat is a priority in this respect. Additional efforts are required to curb the spread of terrorist ideology, notably on the Internet. It is necessary to resume discussions on ways of cutting off financial and material support for terrorists and breaking their nexus with organized crime, and to focus on the problem of foreign terrorist fighters. There are quite a few decisions to that effect by the OSCE decision-making bodies.

We call upon North Macedonia as the future holder of the Chairmanship to treat the fight against drug trafficking with the utmost seriousness. Despite there being a robust mandate and a broad set of

relevant commitments, this topic has been artificially removed from our Organization's current agenda over the past few years, largely because of the systematic destructive efforts of individual participating States. We most definitely do not agree with such an approach and would like to see real practical steps on the part of the authorities of North Macedonia.

We are prepared to carry on looking for common ground as regards the security of information and communication technologies. It is necessary to continue implementing the confidence-building measures developed at the OSCE to reduce the risks of conflicts in the information environment.

It is essential to revive meaningful work in the economic and environmental dimension, which, thanks to the Polish Chairmanship's exertions, is being held ransom, as is the whole Organization, to a single topic, namely the situation in Ukraine. All the more so since sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, originally declared to be a priority by the authorities in Warsaw, has lost none of its relevance. In addition, the illegitimate unilateral restrictive measures introduced by a number of Western States have significantly exacerbated the negative consequences of the pandemic by leading to the disruption of supply chains and the severing of commercial and transport links. We propose that the unilateral sanctions' destructive impact on the European – and indeed global – economic infrastructure be discussed, together with the prospects for further economic co-operation in the OSCE area.

The resumption of work in the human dimension will demand particular efforts by North Macedonia. Further support by the authorities in Skopje for outdated human rights "mechanisms" will not be conducive to constructive dialogue. We trust that the future Chairmanship will take concrete measures to relocate all OSCE human dimension events and the headquarters of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights outside Poland.

We welcome the emphasis on social and economic issues. It is our view that when discussing the integration of societies it is important to pay attention to the protection of the linguistic and educational rights of national minorities and ethnic groups, the elimination of statelessness and how to counter the rampant Russophobia that is being encouraged by a number of Western participating States. Efforts need to be stepped up to combat neo-Nazism, the glorification of Nazism and attempts to falsify history. In the trafficking context it is essential to focus on trafficking in human beings for the purposes of sexual exploitation and the removal of human organs, tissues and cells. The protection of journalists and unhindered access to information must become key topics when discussing freedom of the media.

Finally, the tendency whereby some States are dragged into others' sphere of interests and, as we can all see, lose their sovereignty at the OSCE and become cogs in a machine for the persecution of dissenters, is destructive. It is legitimate to ask how one can possibly work when faced with such a power balance, when it is not participating States in their national capacity that are speaking at this pan-European platform, as stipulated by the Rules of Procedure, but, rather, alliances.

Minister,

Our Organization needs to seriously reflect on finding ways to adapt to the radically altered military and political situation in Europe and the Euro-Atlantic area. Where the OSCE will stand when it celebrates its anniversary in 2025 depends very much on the extent to which we are able to realize the depth of these changes. As for reforming or restructuring the OSCE, that must be a process of collective rethinking with account taken of the positions of all 57 participating States. Russia has consistently been paying attention to this matter during all these past years, proposing various options.

We will support any efforts by North Macedonia as the holder of the Chairmanship to restore balanced work in the three dimensions of security – something that you, Minister, have rightly spoken about at the last two Ministerial Council meetings. We hope that the Chairmanship will put into practice a key point from your statement in Stockholm in 2021. Let me quote the words you said at the time: “Strengthening co-operation through dialogue and partnership built upon the Helsinki Final Act and continuing development of friendly relations among all OSCE participating States is our starting point upon which we will build our agenda for 2023.”

We are convinced that, despite the differences and disagreements, there has never been a greater need than now for a professional conversation at the OSCE. As you rightly pointed out today, the Organization “possesses both tools and capacity”. We consider it important to preserve the unique Vienna platform and to channel the participating States’ discussions into a collective search for unifying principles. Russia stands ready to facilitate this. Achieving solutions and progress depends on us all.

Thank you for your attention.