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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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AT THE 1272nd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 June 2020

On the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

Mr. Chairperson,

Tomorrow, 19 June, is the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. Its main objective, as set out in General Assembly resolution 69/293, which established it, is “to raise awareness of the need to put an end to conflict-related sexual violence”.

Combating sexual violence in conflicts and in peace-building processes is a primary responsibility of national governments. This is also confirmed in the resolution. On the international stage, the United Nations Security Council plays a leading, co-ordinating role in consolidating efforts to counter this evil.

Violence of this nature can be prevented, above all, by ending armed conflicts and addressing their root causes. It is clear that violence spreads when State bodies are unable to protect their citizens. In that regard, strengthening the capacity of law enforcement agencies is a priority.

Sexual violence is often seen as a violation of human rights, and so it is. But in the context of armed conflicts there is a need first of all to consider international humanitarian law.

The issue of combating sexual violence should be regarded as an integral part of the whole set of measures for conflict settlement and post-conflict reconstruction. Due attention should also be paid to such tasks as preventing the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force, combating terrorism and preventing the killing of civilians, including women and children. There is no conclusive evidence that sexual violence is among the root causes of conflict. Rather, it is one of the terrible consequences.

Rape and other acts of sexual abuse are regarded as crimes in all countries. At the same time, there is a need to foster a culture of rejection by society of such abhorrent acts. Measures are required to rehabilitate victims and prevent them from being stigmatized. Religious leaders and local communities in particular could play an important role in this regard.

Russia is committed to international co-operation in combating sexual violence in conflicts. However, it would be wrong to artificially associate this problem exclusively with the task of maintaining

international peace and security. A clear distinction must be made between sexual violence as a war crime and similar criminal acts that are not related to the actions of parties to a conflict. And it should also be recalled that sexual violence is absolutely unacceptable at any time, not only in an armed conflict.

Thank you for your attention.