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I REPUBLIKËS SË SHQIPËRISË PRANË
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PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
TO THE INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS
VIENNA

Statement of the Delegation of Albania
On the events occurred on 4 May 2012 in the Preshevo Valley,
Southern Serbia

As delivered by Ambassador Spiro Koçi at the
911th meeting of the Permanent Council
10 May 2012

Thank you Mr. Chairperson, and allow me to bring to the attention of colleagues and delegations the grave events occurred on 4 May 2012 in the Preshevo Valley in the South of Serbia. On the day of Serbian pre-election silence a number of ethnic Albanians, including a well-respected locally recruited OSCE staff member, were arrested, mistreated and their houses stormed into by the Serbian gendarmerie.

These acts were accompanied by the humiliating images of the detainees, broadcasted by the Serbian gendarmerie, with the clear intention to raise fear and impede Albanians to freely cast their ballots and elect their political representatives.

Albania strongly condemns these brutal acts.

We consider that it is not a mere coincidence that arrests for war crimes, allegedly committed 11 years ago, were carried out just a couple of days before the elections of 6 May in Serbia. Using war crimes rhetoric and fanning the flames of nationalism during electoral campaign might have served well the interests of certain candidates in Serbia's 6 May elections, but allow me to emphasize that such political discourse is certainly detrimental to the democratic standards and inter-ethnic coexistence in Serbia. It has a chilling effect on good-neighborly relations and regional integration and cooperation, as well as EU integration process of the region.

Mr. Chairperson,

We consider that the events in the Preshevo Valley confront the OSCE community with a dangerous situation that can produce destabilizing effects in the region. To prevent any undesired escalation the OSCE is called to react rapidly and decisively. I would therefore like to kindly ask you to take all

necessary measures, within your competences and mandate as Chairperson of the Permanent Council and in close cooperation with the OSCE Secretariat, the Conflict Prevention Center, OSCE Mission in Serbia and its Office in Bujanovc, to put an end to the violence against Albanians in the Preshevo Valley, and to immediately shed light on the accusations, which are politically driven.

By way of conclusion, Mr. Chairperson, we would like to encourage the Serbian authorities to undertake and implement responsible and constructive policies towards Albanian minority in the Preshevo Valley, also with a view to Serbia's role as the future OSCE Chairmanship in Office and the guarantees they have granted in this regard.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.