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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1261st MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 March 2020

**In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro**

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the distinguished Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, Ms. Maryse Daviet, and thank her for her report.

We consider the Mission's work at various levels to be useful in determining specific tasks and the extent of the assistance to be provided to local authorities. In our view, efforts aimed at strengthening parliamentarianism, the independence of the judiciary and investigations, and media pluralism are especially relevant.

We should particularly like to highlight the need to continue developing efforts to counter the security threats that are common to the Balkans – organized crime, drug trafficking, terrorism, trafficking in human beings, corruption and, more recently, cybercrime. We consider the Mission's support in countering these transnational threats to be valuable as well.

We trust that the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, together with the Organization's field presences in neighbouring States, will continue to pay close attention to the strengthening of regional co-operation. We are convinced that the development of co-operation between relevant agencies will be of great help in tackling many of the challenges currently faced by the Balkan region as a whole.

We are again obliged to point out that the Mission often gets sidetracked into promoting the European integration agenda – an agenda that is not part of its remit. We recall that the Mission's work should be carried out in strict accordance with its mandate.

As a separate item, we are obliged to draw attention to the Montenegrin parliament's adoption of the Act on Freedom of Religion or Belief and on the Legal Status of Religious Communities. The new law not only drastically impinges on the legitimate interests of the Metropolate of Montenegro and the Littoral of the Serbian Orthodox Church, but also adds an international dimension to this topic. The unity and cohesion of the Orthodox world, along with the preservation of its age-old foundations, are key to ensuring the normal development of society.

Finally, we should like to wish Ms. Daviet and all the Mission staff further success in their work.

Thank you for your attention.