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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1117th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 November 2016

**In response to the address by the
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Albania, Mr. Ditmir Bushati**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Minister,

We have listened with interest to the assessment of the current security situation in the Euro-Atlantic region and the Organization's role in strengthening stability and facilitating the development of co-operation among the participating States.

We are in agreement regarding the importance of the OSCE as a key platform for working together on solutions to security issues. The example of the Western Balkans illustrates very well the positive role that our Organization has played in stabilizing the situation in the region. We also remember the OSCE's efforts to help normalize the domestic situation in Albania itself in 1997. We firmly believe that the key to maintaining and strengthening regional stability is the development of good-neighbourly relations on the basis of respect for one another's interests and restraint from ensuring one's own security at the expense of the security of others.

This key principle also applies in full measure to the entire OSCE area, where, unfortunately, more than 25 years after the adoption of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe dividing lines persist and bloc-based thinking and the logic of "us and them" prevail.

As for your comments, Mr. Minister, on Kosovo, I should like to point out that Russia has always taken a position of principle in this regard, based on United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 and the consensus nature of the adoption of OSCE decisions, which you also mentioned.

As regards the bitter internal Ukrainian conflict, we support the argument that the current explosive situation can and must be settled with the aid of the immediate and unconditional implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures.

The decisions adopted at the NATO summits in Newport and Warsaw on strengthening the Alliance's so-called eastern flank add nothing to stability in the Euro-Atlantic region either. Even the terminology itself attests to the persistence of militarized thinking in a number of capital cities. We do not believe that the countries of Europe are willing to continue to pay for a policy towards open confrontation.

All this places serious limitations on the possibilities for responding jointly to growing threats to the security of our countries from outside the region, including critical issues such as countering terrorism and violent extremism, where the participating States need to show a united front.

The policy of sanctions, inherited from the past, is interfering with the development of mutually advantageous trade and economic relations, reducing turnover and hindering improvements in the well-being and social protection of the population of our countries. Harmonization of integration processes in the east and west of the Eurasian region would help to improve Europe's competitiveness. This could make a serious contribution to the implementation of the task set at the OSCE Summit in Astana in 2010 of building a security community.

As for the OSCE's human dimension, we firmly believe that human rights should not be used as a foreign policy tool. It is important to eliminate any politicization of human rights problems and to work together in the name of ensuring the security and prosperity of the citizens of our countries.

We are pleased to note the distinguished Minister's assessment of the need for national capacity-building efforts by the OSCE Presence in Albania in a number of areas, including combating corruption and organized crime, as he mentions. For our part, we have supported the field mission politically and financially for many years, viewing it as one of the key instruments for international assistance to the development of the host country. We believe the Presence's flexible approach to its mandated tasks to be entirely justified. This enables it to adapt and focus resources in accordance with the current requests of the authorities.

Mr. Minister,

We are interested in further development of bilateral co-operation between Russia and Albania. Unfortunately, the full potential of our inter-State relations has still not been realized. Unlike the extensive co-operation in the humanitarian field, trade and economic co-operation continues to lag behind. The key instrument for promoting bilateral ties – the Russian-Albanian Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Co-operation – has effectively not been operating for seven years. The opportunities for co-operation at the regional level are not being used. We trust that the appointment as soon as possible of an Albanian co-chairperson to the Intergovernmental Commission will help to speed up the preparations for its next meeting and will ultimately give positive impetus to full-scale bilateral co-operation. We are interested in work based on a pragmatic approach in the interests of the peoples of our countries on a broad agenda.

Thank you for your attention.