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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1342nd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

28 October 2021

**On the report by the former Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at the
Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk**

Madam Chairperson,

At the outset, I should like to express our surprise and disappointment at the Chairmanship's decision to include in the agenda of the Permanent Council a discussion of this field presence, which no longer exists, almost one month after the termination of its mandate. This is contrary to established OSCE practice and is an unacceptable aberration that should not set a precedent. We trust that future OSCE Chairmanships will not repeat the experiment of holding such a discussion on a non-operational field operation after it has been closed down.

We recall that the mandate of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk on the Russian-Ukrainian border expired on 30 September. We gave a detailed explanation as to why its mandate was not extended during the Permanent Council meeting on 2 September, and also outlined the reasons in an interpretative statement with regard to the Permanent Council decision of 23 September on the allocation of resources connected with the closure of the Observer Mission in question. We will not repeat ourselves.

Nevertheless, we should like to express our gratitude to the distinguished Ambassador György Varga for the excellent work done by the Mission during the period of its mandate. Throughout its work on the border, the Mission reported a consistently calm situation and confirmed the absence of any military movements. A number of countries, which are determined only to stir up confrontation, have never properly appreciated the deployment of OSCE observers on Russian territory as a gesture of goodwill and as a confidence-building measure on the part of Russia. This is not your fault, distinguished Ambassador Varga, but the fault of those States that have made regrettable political choices.

We should like to acknowledge once again your successful personal efforts in keeping the Mission running smoothly in the difficult circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic and the effective interaction you established with the Russian host authorities. We welcome the fact that the vaccination of the members of the Mission, organized by the Russian side at no cost, reduced to the greatest extent possible the risks to their lives and health.

In conclusion, we should like to thank you and all your former colleagues in the Mission for the good work done and to wish you success in your other endeavours and the best of health.

Thank you for your attention.