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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY RUDENKO,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 957th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 June 2013

In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission in Skopje

Mr. Chairperson,

We are pleased to welcome Ambassador Ralf Breth and thank him for his detailed and structured report. We appreciate the active and productive work of the Mission headed by him.

We note the progress towards reform in Macedonia. At the same time, the assessments in your report, in particular regarding the absence of a noticeable improvement in the last year in inter-ethnic relations, cannot but give rise to concern. Against this background, the negative consequences of the unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo and the nationalistic rhetoric by some politicians in the region are still appreciable.

In this connection, the most important task for the Mission to Skopje is to endeavour to bring about harmony in inter-ethnic relations and to strengthen mutual understanding between communities as a basis for safeguarding peace and stability. In this context it is important to continue to give attention to supporting efforts to implement the provisions of the Ohrid Framework Agreement with account taken of the challenges faced by Macedonia today.

We strongly condemn the incidence of inter-ethnic violence. We hope that the civilian monitors deployed by the Mission in the problem regions can play an important role in preventing it.

There is also a need for the Mission to provide assistance to State bodies in safeguarding the rule of law, improving the work of law enforcement authorities and reforming the judiciary. In our view it is important to continue efforts to strengthen the police capabilities to make it more effective in combating organized crime, terrorism and extremism, trafficking in human beings and illicit arms and drug trafficking.

These problems, which affect the entire region, can be solved only by the concerted efforts of the States in the Western Balkans and with the support of the OSCE field presences

in the region. In view of this situation, we believe that it is short-sighted to reduce the police component in the Balkan missions.

Mr. Chairperson,

Mutually beneficial Russian-Macedonian relations continue to develop and a good basis has been created for their further intensification in all areas. We note the measured and responsible role played by Macedonia in fostering stability in the Balkans and highly appreciate the level of co-operation by our delegations in international organizations, in particular the United Nations, the OSCE and the Council of Europe.

We should like to express our support for the efforts of the Mission and wish Ambassador Breth and his colleague further success in their work.

Thank you for your attention.