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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 916th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 June 2012

**In response to the statement by Mr. Edmond Haxhinasto,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Albania**

Mr. Chairperson,
Minister,

We are pleased to welcome you to the Permanent Council and are grateful for the presentation of the priorities of the Albanian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

We are gratified to note that many of the priorities highlighted by you coincide with the Russian view of the most pressing issues on the Council of Europe's agenda. We share the attitude of the Albanian Chairmanship calling for greater attention to intercultural dialogue, including its religious dimension. We also agree with you that this problem has become particularly acute in view of the economic crisis, which has created a "breeding ground" for extremism, xenophobia and aggressive nationalism. Unfortunately, this is accompanied in a number of member States of the Council of Europe by continuing manifestations of neo-Nazism and the glorification of former members of the SS and their supporters. We trust that the Council of Europe will respond appropriately and reject such phenomena.

We support the Albanian Chairmanship in its decision to pay particular attention to the fostering of tolerance among young people. Russia is making a contribution to the discussion of this problem by hosting the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth in St. Petersburg on 21–25 September and the Youth Event taking place at the same time.

We agree with the Albanian Chairmanship regarding the priority to be placed on promoting the protection of the rights of children and women. The relevance of this problem and particularly the protection of children is demonstrated by the continuing violence and at times cruel treatment meted out to them.

We have taken note of your call for the "promotion of direct and significant contacts" between the Council of Europe and the "authorities" in Kosovo at all levels. As you know,

not all States – both member States of the Council of Europe and OSCE participating States – recognize the independence of Kosovo. We expect the activities of the Council of Europe regarding this territory to be in full compliance with the provisions of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 and the status-neutral approach to Kosovo of the Council of Europe.

Regarding your proposals concerning the expansion of co-operation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE, we believe that particular attention should be paid in the first place to the protection of national minorities in a number of European countries, especially the status of “non-citizens”, who are deprived of basic political and socio-economic rights, including the right to take part in elections. The safeguarding of freedom of movement and liberalization of visa regimes should be among the priorities in this co-operation.

It is also important to step up co-operation between our organizations in countering trafficking in organs. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly rightly drew attention to this topic in connection with Senator Dick Marty’s report on the investigation of accusations of inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo, which brought to light the involvement of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army in trafficking of human organs.

Like the Albanian Chairmanship, we support efforts to reform the Council of Europe initiated by its Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland. We hope that this process will help to consolidate the authority of the Council of Europe and maintain its unique role as the key pan-European organization in the humanitarian field, including the protection of human rights. This is important for strengthening the pan-European legal and humanitarian space as vital constituent elements in the creation of a single and indivisible “security community” in the OSCE region. We trust that the work of the Albanian Chairmanship will make a worthy contribution to the fulfilment of this task that is common to both organizations.

I wish you, Minister, success in the accomplishment of the important and responsible mission as head of the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers.

Thank you for your attention.