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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1134th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

16 February 2017

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, the distinguished Ambassador Andrea Orizio, who is here to present his first report to the Permanent Council. We thank him for his interesting and informative report. We note the overall objective assessments of the development of the situation in Serbia and of the Serbian Government's constructive and responsible role in strengthening stability and security in the Balkans.

We appreciate the Mission's significant contribution in assisting the Serbian authorities in meeting the priorities of reform. It is important that the Mission's activities are co-ordinated with the host State and developed strictly within the framework of the mandate.

We support the Mission's priority of improving the Serbian law enforcement system, including in the context of the fight against organized crime, corruption, human trafficking and illicit trafficking in arms and drugs. We are grateful for the assistance in the training of Serbian anti-narcotics police carried out at the Interagency Advanced Training Institute of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs in St. Petersburg in September 2016. We are ready to continue this co-operation if Serbia is interested in doing so. We consider it justified to strengthen the Mission's regional approach to combating cross-border crime.

We note the Mission's expert assistance in legislative and judicial reform, the promotion of media liberalization and the development of democratic institutions and local self-governance, all of which are priorities for the Serbian Government. We urge that these activities be carried out in close co-ordination with the Serbian authorities and within the framework of the OSCE's commitments.

We welcome the Serbian Government's responsible approach to the protection of the rights of national minorities, including in the south and south-west of the country, as well as to the investigation of war crimes committed during the 1990s, which was a tragic period for the Balkans. We consider it absolutely necessary that equal attention be focused on ensuring

the rights of Serbian minorities and on punishing perpetrators of crimes against them. We call on the Mission's leadership to respond quickly to provocative rhetoric and events that may lead to destabilization in the region, to combat the spread of religious extremism and to promote the establishment of inter-ethnic and interfaith harmony.

The Serbian Government has confidently demonstrated significant achievements in all key areas. There has been obvious progress in many areas covered by the Mission's mandate.

In conclusion, I should like to wish the distinguished Ambassador Andrea Orizio and his team continued success.

Thank you for your attention.