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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1305th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

11 March 2021

Strengthening scientific and technological co-operation in response to the spread of the coronavirus pandemic

Madam Chairperson,

These are not the best of times for our Organization. There is an acute lack of trust among the participating States, confrontational rhetoric is being ramped up and regional tensions are on the rise. Adding to the deepening crisis is the precarious epidemiological situation in the OSCE area and the world as a whole. The new coronavirus pandemic has spread rapidly around the globe, paying no heed to national borders and the political or socio-economic systems of individual countries.

In the face of this global challenge, which is unprecedented in modern history, the OSCE's considerable potential is more than called for. The necessary tools were laid down by the founders as early as the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. Allow me to recall: In point 4 of the section on Co-operation in the Field of Economics, of Science and Technology and of the Environment, the participating States noted that "scientific and technological co-operation constitutes an important contribution to the strengthening of security and co-operation among them, in that it assists the effective solution of problems of common interest and the improvement of the conditions of human life."

At the same time, they recognized that "possibilities exist for further improving scientific and technological co-operation", and to this end, expressed their "intention to remove obstacles to such co-operation". Fields of co-operation included, among others, medicine and public health, namely: Research on cardiovascular, tumour and virus diseases (!), molecular biology, neurophysiology; development and testing of new drugs (!); study of contemporary problems of paediatrics, gerontology and the organization and techniques of medical services.

The further specified forms and methods of co-operation remain relevant today.

Unfortunately, over the past forty-five years, those good intentions have not only failed to translate into explicit commitments by the participating States and have not become part of the OSCE's mandate, but have not even been discussed in various formats. But we have the power to rectify this. The first step has been taken – in the joint statement on COVID-19 of 15 December 2020, we underscored "the importance of

scientific and technological co-operation in responding to the pandemic, particularly in the health sector”. Participating States noted “with satisfaction the significant progress on the development and supply of COVID-19 vaccines, vital for human health and security”.

Further confirmation of the ability to co-operate effectively in critical situations was the unanimous adoption on 26 February this year of United Nations Security Council resolution 2565 on international co-operation to facilitate equitable and affordable access to COVID-19 vaccines in conflict areas. The document underscores the importance of ensuring equal access to vaccines against the new coronavirus infection and of international co-operation in fulfilling this important task. The resolution was a response to the initiative by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres of 17 February this year to create an emergency task force within the G20 to prepare and implement a global immunization plan.

The European Medicines Agency has started a rolling review of the application dossier for the Russian Sputnik V vaccine against coronavirus. We hope that the European regulator will evaluate the Russian vaccine based on scientific and humanitarian considerations rather than political ones.

I will not go into detail about the advantages of the Russian development. I will only remind you that, with a comparable efficacy of over 90 per cent and an excellent safety profile, confirmed by the publication in the authoritative medical journal *The Lancet* of the preliminary results of clinical trials of this drug, Sputnik V is markedly superior to existing alternatives in terms of cost and logistical accessibility.

On 17 February, the Italian Lazzaro Spallanzani National Institute for Infectious Diseases published a scientific and technical report on the Sputnik V vaccine, which confirms the high level of safety and immunogenicity of the Russian drug. We can only welcome this objective approach of the scientific community to the issue of combating the pandemic. We support the call by Italian scientists to remove ideology from the fight against one of the most serious challenges of our time.

To date, the Russian vaccine has already been registered in more than 40 countries. Russia is ready to provide comprehensive information on our scientists’ development as well as trial batches of Sputnik V to all willing States so that partners can autonomously and independently analyse its pharmacological characteristics and other economic and logistical factors.

Russia invites all members of the international community without exception – regardless of political or economic considerations – to co-operate in the fight against a common threat. We consider vaccination against COVID-19 to be a global public good, as affirmed in a World Health Assembly resolution. We urge interested States to consider launching production of the vaccine, including for external markets, in their own facilities. This would help to create new jobs, develop bilateral and multilateral partnerships to combat the pandemic and save the lives of the citizens of our States.

The Russian proposal to introduce trade war and sanctions-free corridors for the unimpeded supply of essential goods, food, medicines and personal protective equipment needed in the fight against the pandemic will also help to meet these challenges. This idea is partly reflected in the aforementioned statement on COVID-19 of 15 December 2020: “We recognize ... the importance of co-ordinating border services with wider government efforts to protect health, including by ensuring the flow and availability of vital medical and food supplies and other essential goods and services, to combat the pandemic.”

We are convinced that the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, whose work we have reviewed today, could play a role in developing ways to strengthen scientific and technological co-operation in the medical and health fields. This would be a serious contribution not only to raising the profile of the OSCE’s second dimension, but also to ensuring security in

the OSCE area as a whole. The mandate necessary for this could be enshrined in a separate decision of the forthcoming OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Stockholm. Let us combat this pandemic together.

Thank you for your attention.