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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1171st (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 January 2018

**In response to the address by
the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Minister for Foreign Affairs and
International Co-operation of Italy, H.E. Angelino Alfano**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Minister,

We are grateful for the detailed presentation of the 2018 Italian OSCE Chairmanship's priorities, many of which we share.

Your Chairmanship comes at a difficult historical moment. There is neither trust nor agreement among the OSCE countries. Hopes for building a united and indivisible security system in the Euro-Atlantic region turned out to be an illusion. NATO's military infrastructure continues moving eastwards, despite the assurances given following the Cold War. The foundations of strategic stability, including the system of agreements in this area, have been methodically destroyed over many years now. We have witnessed an aggressive policy of "colour revolutions", interference in countries' internal affairs and the toppling of undesirable governments. Governments now resort to a policy of sanctions and restrictions, though their true aim here is to secure trade and economic advantages for themselves and hamper competitors' development. Instead of equal co-operation, we see double standards and hear statements about the "exceptional nature" of particular nations and countries. All of this breeds problems and conflicts rather than helping us to resolve them and makes us weaker before the common threats of terrorism, illegal migration, drugs, trafficking in human beings, and organized crime.

We agree that for Europe today, it is of paramount importance to revive the "spirit of Helsinki" and restore trust among the OSCE countries. We hope that Italy's diplomacy will deploy its inherent elegance, perceptiveness and tact to use effectively the OSCE's possibilities for dialogue to overcome differences, bring our positions closer and come up with consensus-based responses to common challenges.

Mr. Minister,

We fully share your desire to continue the OSCE's efforts to settle regional conflicts, above all the crisis in eastern Ukraine. We hope that the Chairmanship will play a constructive role in its peaceful resolution. The Contact Group requires all-round support as the key format for direct talks between the parties to the conflict – the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk. Full implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures, endorsed by the United Nations Security Council, remains the key to restoring peace in Donbas. We need to achieve a ceasefire, the withdrawal of weapons, and implementation of the entire political package of measures – according Donbas a special status, carrying out constitutional reform, and holding an amnesty and local elections. The Chairmanship will also have the job of ensuring the genuinely objective and unbiased work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine.

We cannot let up efforts on the other conflict tracks either. We seek a political settlement to the Kosovo problem on the basis of UN Security Council resolution 1244. We will support the Chairmanship's efforts regarding the Transdniestria and Nagorno-Karabakh settlement processes. We greatly appreciate the OSCE's role in maintaining the dialogue between Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia at the Geneva International Discussions on Security and Stability in the Trans-Caucasus.

We are pleased to see that the Mediterranean region and the migration crisis are prominent among the Italian Chairmanship's priorities. We share your assessment of this crisis as one of the greatest challenges to European security. In combating this crisis, what is important is to succeed in eradicating the primary causes of mass population flows from countries of origin, establish additional channels for legal migration, facilitate migrants' social integration and act against intolerance and xenophobia in host countries. We support the Chairmanship's desire to work actively with the OSCE partner countries.

Mr. Minister,

The OSCE countries face the paramount task of protecting our citizens from transnational threats, which are becoming more complex and diverse with every passing year. We hope that the Chairmanship will consolidate efforts to fight terrorism, especially propaganda of the ideology of terror. It remains our common goal to establish a global anti-terrorist front. We hope that the OSCE Counter-Terrorism Conference, which you have planned for May, will help us to achieve these objectives. We also welcome the Chairmanship's intention to take an active stand on preventing illegal drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings and other forms of trafficking. Russia continues implementing OSCE projects for training narcotics police from Afghanistan and Serbia.

We think it important to keep up the work to reduce the risks of conflicts arising from the use of information and communications technologies, all the more so as the OSCE has developed a good toolbox in this area over recent years. We need to put these tools into practical use so as to raise trust among countries and not allow groundless, politicized accusations to be made against each other. Our approach is based on not allowing militarization of the information space, non-interference in countries' internal affairs, and unconditional recognition of their digital sovereignty.

We supported the main priorities pursued by the Italian Chairmanship in the OSCE's economic and environmental dimension, your focus on promoting innovation, developing human capital and improving good public and corporate governance. We believe that the OSCE could serve as a platform for exchanging best practice in the digital economy and helping countries to make optimum use of the results of scientific and technological progress.

At the same time, we hope that Italy will maintain continuity with the previous German and Austrian Chairmanships and will continue the dialogue on economic connectivity. We firmly believe that the OSCE can become a platform for building contacts between the various integration organizations of Eurasia and Europe. This is important for making the idea of a common economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok a future reality.

We should also not overlook such important areas of the OSCE's economic work as developing multi-modal transportation and transport corridors, reducing the risks of natural and man-made disasters, and fighting corruption and money laundering.

Mr. Minister,

The OSCE's human dimension is in need of serious optimization. Persistent skewed thematic approaches, organizational problems and institutions' arbitrariness seriously limit dialogue and co-operation in this area. We hope that Italy will be able to respond to these challenges, including bringing order to the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw. Although we share the view that civil society and youth have an important role to play in today's world, we should not forget that the OSCE is, after all, an intergovernmental organization.

We think it important to pay priority attention to a respectful attitude towards traditional values, social and economic human rights, the rights of national minorities, including linguistic and education rights, combating trafficking in human beings, preventing politically-motivated persecution of journalists and the media, preserving cultural and historical heritage, reducing the number of stateless persons, non-interference in private and family life, and combating discrimination in sport. Preventing the spread of extremist and neo-Nazi ideology, attempts to whitewash Nazis and their supporters, destruction and desecration of monuments to those who fought in the anti-Nazi coalition, and attempts to falsify the history of the Second World War and revise the Nuremberg Tribunal's decisions should be essential areas of action. We think the time is ripe for adopting a comprehensive OSCE ministerial decision on protecting the rights of the child, all the more so as this was the subject of a seminar in Warsaw last year.

We hope that this year of the Italian Chairmanship will finally see follow-up on the instructions of the Basel Ministerial Council in 2014 regarding the adoption of declarations on combating anti-Christian and anti-Muslim sentiment. We recall the Russian initiative to draft a working definition of intolerance and discrimination towards Christians and Muslims.

Also still on the OSCE's agenda are tasks such as the Organization's institutional reform, drafting a charter, rectifying thematic and geographical imbalances, and drafting a common set of guidelines for executive structures and principles for election observation.

In conclusion, I want to wish Italy success in this difficult job of the Chairmanship. The widely differing positions between States means that bringing them towards a consensus

requires great skill and effort. We are sure that the Italian Chairmanship's team has enough of Leonardo da Vinci's inventiveness, Rafael's elegance, Marco Polo's ability to be a bridge between East and West, and Garibaldi's decisiveness. We welcome your intention to work with maximum openness and transparency, giving full consideration to every country's positions and interests, as the Chairmanship's mandate demands. For our part, we are ready for honest co-operation and we support as a partner all endeavours aimed at restoring trust and strengthening security and co-operation in the OSCE area.

Thank you for your attention.