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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1108th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 July 2016

**In response to the report by Ms. Nina Suomalainen,
Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje**

Mr. Chairperson,

The work of the OSCE Mission to Skopje is a subject of our constant attention. We assume that the work of the field presence headed by Ms. Nina Suomalainen is aimed at assisting the Macedonian authorities in the resolution of the various different tasks.

In fact, Macedonia today is in an extremely difficult situation. The country is facing challenges from without on an unprecedented scale. An acute political crisis has existed for one and a half years now, provoked by attempts of the opposition that lost the election to obtain a privileged position for themselves through blackmail and “street democracy”. The Macedonian authorities are working hard on constitutional and legislative matters. However, the efforts by the Macedonian Government to rectify the domestic political situation in consultation with political opponents have been handicapped by the energetic support provided to the opposition by the European Union and the United States of America. Their mediating efforts have not yielded results to date, mainly because the Pržino agreement has been used only to obtain unilateral concessions from the authorities in Skopje with the full connivance of an unconstructive opposition. As a result, the early parliamentary elections have been called off, the citizens of Macedonia have been denied the right to express their opinion about events, and the crisis has been “frozen” for an indefinite period.

The situation in the country is made worse by the humanitarian crisis in the Balkans connected with the arrival in Europe of masses of refugees from the Middle East and North Africa. Instead of resolving its own socio-economic problems, Macedonia has been forced to concentrate its far from unlimited resources on dealing with the migration crisis. The continuing domestic political uncertainty in the country and the unprecedented influx of migrants increases the risk of an uncontrolled degradation of the domestic situation, the spread of radical ideology, a growth in the threat of extremism and terrorism and a general deterioration of the crime situation.

It is no doubt useful to keep track of the way the domestic political tension and the migration crisis are affecting the development of the security situation in the country. At the same time, it is extremely important that this activity does not hinder the productive work by the Mission as set forth in its mandate in assisting the host authorities to implement the Ohrid Framework Agreement, harmonize inter-ethnic relations and strengthen mutual understanding between communities as a basis for maintaining peace and stability in the country.

Efforts by the field presence to assist government structures in Macedonia in ensuring the rule of law, developing the work of law enforcement bodies and reforming the judiciary continue to be of relevance. Practical assistance to local law enforcement bodies to enhance their ability to combat organized crime, terrorism, extremism, trafficking in human beings and illicit drug and arms trafficking is particularly important at the moment. We urge the Mission not to reduce the attention paid by it to these tasks, in spite of the current difficult conditions in the country.

We should also like to draw the attention of the Head of Mission to the need to adhere to the consensus approach adopted in the OSCE, particularly during public assessments of the decisions of the host authorities and in regular reports.

We wish you, Ms. Suomalainen, and the team led by you further success in your work.

Thank you for your attention.