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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1253rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 December 2019

**On the results of the 50th round of the Geneva International Discussions on the
Trans-Caucasus**

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to present our assessments of the 50th round of the Geneva International Discussions on Security and Stability in the Trans-Caucasus, held in Geneva on 10 and 11 December 2019.

Like most of the participants in the discussions, the Russian delegation had held certain positive expectations for the milestone round. Of course, we had been aware that the development of the situation in the region over the past six months objectively had not boded well for the achievement of breakthrough agreements. At the same time, it had been hoped that through direct dialogue the representatives of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Georgia would have been able to make progress in dealing with the most acute problems that had built up between the Transcaucasian authorities. Unfortunately, the parties failed to demonstrate the pragmatism necessary in the current conditions.

We note that, thanks to joint efforts, it has been possible to avoid any undue aggravation of the situation on the border between South Ossetia and Georgia. It is also crucial that the parties remain committed to continuing the dialogue within the framework of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM). While such dialogue can sometimes be difficult, there is no alternative. In principle, there is also a general position in favour of gradual de-escalation in the South Ossetian-Georgian border area. During the latest round, this stance was supported by all participants in the Geneva Discussions. We are seeing productive practical proposals by the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia for resolving the situation. We hope that a strategy that is acceptable to South Ossetia and Georgia can be agreed upon at the forthcoming IPRM meetings in Ergneti and, if necessary, during the new round of Geneva Discussions. It seems that for the future, Georgia should more carefully consider the proposal of its South Ossetian colleagues to conduct negotiations on the border line.

The negative atmosphere surrounding the 50th round of discussions had also been due to the emotional polemic about the Georgian citizen Dr. Vazha Gaprindashvili, who is being detained in Tskhinval. It seems that this and a number of similar stories in the past are the result of an absence of even basic mutual understanding and co-operation between Georgia and South Ossetia. We hope that Dr. Gaprindashvili will soon return to his family and patients.

Another topic is the joint statement by the participants in the discussions on the non-use of force. We are convinced that work on this must be continued. The adoption of the document would be a tangible contribution to ensuring stability and security in the Trans-Caucasus. It is sincerely regrettable that the representatives of Georgia, with the support of the United States of America, continue to avoid fulfilling this priority task, provided for by the agreements between Dmitry Medvedev and Nicolas Sarkozy of 12 August 2008.

Substantive consideration of a range of issues on internally displaced persons and refugees continues to be blocked. The representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are ready to discuss this issue only if the Georgian Government refrains from submitting its annual politicized resolution at the United Nations General Assembly. We believe this approach is justified, particularly against the backdrop of the obstruction of access of representatives of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian authorities to specialized international forums, especially the United Nations system.

In conclusion, we again urge our Georgian colleagues and our Western colleagues that support them to take a more balanced and objective approach to settlement in the region. This is especially true for those States that volunteered to chair the OSCE. Solidarity with one of the parties to the discussions in Geneva, clearly demonstrated in the statement by the so-called Group of Friends of Georgia at the Ministerial Council meeting in Bratislava, will not contribute to the effectiveness of the OSCE's mediatory role in solving the problems in the Trans-Caucasus.

Thank you for your attention.