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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE  
1315th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

25 May 2021

**On the forced landing of Ryanair flight FR4978 in Minsk**

Madam Chairperson,

I can see that politicians and diplomats are becoming experts in the field of international aviation safety. That is most gratifying. I should like to inform you that even the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has refused to comment on this incident and will hold a special meeting on 27 May. But the OSCE, as always, is ahead of everyone else. I have several fundamental comments to make.

Of course, we are very surprised at such a co-ordinated response by the representatives of a number of Western countries and certain international organizations to this event, about which so little is known as yet. There are no details and there has been no investigation. The Belarusian authorities have proposed conducting an international investigation, with the participation of ICAO, the European Union, the United States of America and several other countries. But I think that following today's statements any normal and self-respecting country would be unlikely to co-operate with States of that ilk which are fixated on revenge.

No matter how you feel about the country, it is not the "Lukashenka regime" but an OSCE participating State – the Republic of Belarus – and it is headed by President Alexander Grigoryevich Lukashenko. If we now start using the vocabulary of the Maidan in this room, then we shall not get very far. And at the OSCE Permanent Council, things are now close to the point where the discourse heard here can no longer be described as diplomacy.

On the substance of the matter, however, I should like to add the following. Quite a number of far more serious incidents have occurred in the past on numerous occasions. And no one convened special meetings of the Permanent Council or put forward "current issues". Much less did anyone punish the perpetrators. Let me remind you of these very striking cases.

In 2013, at the request of the US intelligence services, which were literally engaged in a manhunt for the former CIA agent Edward Snowden at that time, the President of Bolivia's aeroplane flying from Moscow was forced to land in Vienna and was searched. In 2004, the United States forced the private jet of the former First Deputy Finance Minister of Russia, and later Senator, Mr. Andrey Vavilov, to land at Palm Beach Airport during a Moscow-Barbados-Aspen flight. He was subjected to a humiliating interrogation lasting many hours. In 2012, Turkey used fighter jets to intercept a Moscow-Damascus flight and force the

aeroplane to land. The latter was then searched and its cargo seized. Belarusian airliners have also been the target of forced landings. In 2016, 50 km before entering Belarusian airspace, a Belavia flight that had taken off from Kyiv International Airport was forced to return to the airport of departure as instructed by a Ukrainian air traffic controller, who threatened to send up fighter jets if it refused. All of this was in order to remove the anti-Maidan activist, Mr. Armen Martirosyan, from the aircraft. Following a similar scenario, in 2020, the Ukrainian intelligence services planned to capture employees of a so-called private military company by means of an emergency landing in Kyiv of an aeroplane en route to Istanbul from Minsk. Luckily, this Ukrainian Security Service operation failed.

It is telling that all the aforementioned acts were deliberate and committed in violation of international law. There was little or no reaction from our Western colleagues. None of the perpetrators have been brought to justice.

I urge everyone to refrain from applying double standards. Steps need to be taken in order that any situation may be assessed soberly and in a clinical fashion on the basis of all the information and materials available. And as far as we are aware, Belarus is prepared to make these materials available so that an appropriate investigation can be conducted. This is indeed a demonstration of openness and willingness to co-operate.

Thank you for your attention.