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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1099th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 May 2016

**On the ratification of the
Agreement on the State Border with South Ossetia**

Mr. Chairperson,

The law ratifying the Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of South Ossetia on the State Border was signed on 26 April 2016. The Agreement had been signed in Moscow on 18 February 2015.

The Agreement is the basic document determining the State border between the two countries – the Russian Federation and South Ossetia – along its entire length. The administrative territorial border between the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic at the time of the collapse of the USSR was taken as the basis for the State border, to be formalized by State laws and regulations and appropriate cartographic materials. The Agreement is designed to establish the State border regime of the Russian Federation on the relevant segment, without creating any obstacles to the free movement of citizens of the two States.

Accordingly, contrary to politicized assertions, the Agreement does not affect the interests of third countries, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, or the legal rights of Georgian citizens. The Agreement was concluded between two sovereign States in full conformity with international law and the interests of the peoples of both countries. This also applies in full measure to other bilateral agreements with the Republic of South Ossetia, which are aimed at intensifying co-operation on the basis of equal rights on a wide range of issues.

In the light of the regular attempts by our Georgian colleagues in the OSCE and the United Nations to politicize the so-called refugee issue in the absence of representatives from Sukhum and Tskhinval, we should like to draw attention to the official explanations provided in this connection by the foreign ministries of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Their appeals will be circulated in the OSCE.

The authorities of these Trans-Caucasus republics are calling for a depoliticized discussion of the important humanitarian problem of refugees and internally displaced persons and for the problem to be solved step by step in accordance with international law, taking into account the new situation that exists in the region. The South Ossetian and Abkhazian authorities confirm their readiness to seek balanced solutions to this problem within the framework of the Geneva International Discussions on Security and Stability in the Trans-Caucasus, in which all three States are represented. At the same time, within the framework of the Geneva International Discussions attention is regularly drawn to the Georgian Government's counter-productive practice of submitting draft thematic resolutions for consideration by the United Nations General Assembly, to which the Abkhazians and South Ossetians are denied access by the American authorities, thereby depriving them of any opportunity to present their case on the eve of the vote.

We stand shoulder to shoulder with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We urge our Georgian colleagues to engage in a constructive discussion of all the issues of concern to the Georgian Government in direct dialogue with the authorities of the neighbouring republics, avoiding politicized assessments in multilateral formats in which neither the Abkhazian nor the South Ossetian authorities are represented.

Thank you for your attention.