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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1170th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

21 December 2017

**On the latest round of the International Discussions on
Security and Stability in the Trans-Caucasus**

Mr. Chairperson,

We regret that during the latest round of discussions, Georgia once again blocked the adoption of a draft statement by the participants on the non-use of force, in spite of the most diverse alternatives presented at the meeting. I recall that consolidating the principle of the non-use of force is vital for safeguarding the lasting security of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which was pointed out in the agreements by Mr. Medvedev and Mr. Sarkozy of 12 August 2008 and therefore remains a key aspect of the Geneva meetings.

The continuing military activity by the United States of America and NATO in Georgia gives cause for concern. These activities are not in the least conducive to stability and security in the Southern Caucasus. During the discussions in Geneva, the representatives of Abkhazia, Russia and South Ossetia emphasized the harmfulness of the decision by the US State Department to sell Javelin anti-tank missiles to Georgia. I would point out that this is the largest military deal between the US and Georgian authorities since 2008, effectively pushing the leadership of Georgia to new and perilous ventures. Under these circumstances, it is completely natural that Abkhazia and South Ossetia should confirm that they find the defence aid provided to them by Russia to be justified and timely.

During the meetings, the delegations of Abkhazia and Russia also pointed out that the persistent efforts by the Georgian embassy in the United Kingdom to have the memorial erected in Kilmarnock to the inhabitants of Sukhum, victims of the war in 1992 and 1993, dismantled contradicts statements by the Georgian authorities regarding their willingness to seek reconciliation with their "Abkhazian and South Ossetian brothers". Russia emphasizes that the attempt to erase the memory of the fallen inhabitants of the city is an unseemly and sacrilegious act. This is in complete contrast to the civilized behaviour of Abkhazia, which has provided every possible assistance with the reburial of the remains of Georgian soldiers.

All of the participants in the Geneva International Discussions apart from Georgia noted the stability and predictability of the situation at the Georgian-Abkhazian and

Georgian-South Ossetian borders. The existing checkpoints are coping completely with the growing transborder movement of people and vehicles. Since the last meeting in Geneva, 1.2 million people and 37,000 vehicles – 12 per cent more than during the same period in 2016 – have crossed the border between Abkhazia and Georgia, and 181,000 people and 50,000 vehicles have passed between South Ossetia and Georgia.

Over the year, there has been a significant reduction in the number of incidents at the State border between Abkhazia and Georgia.

We are gratified to note that the participants in the Geneva International Discussions have stressed their willingness to develop the positive trend towards the resolution of humanitarian issues. Recently, the sides have successfully conducted a joint exchange of prisoners. This was made possible thanks to the demonstrated goodwill and lack of politicization. Agreement has been reached on a continuation of the work of the relevant bodies to preserve the cultural heritage and search for missing persons. We hope that by the next meeting in Geneva, scheduled for March 2018, the progress in settling humanitarian problems will be more marked and that the trend itself will be sustained.

Thank you for your attention.