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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1239th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 September 2019

On the Caspian Economic Forum

Mr. Chairperson,

We congratulate our friends from Turkmenistan on the successful organization of the first Caspian Economic Forum in the city of Türkmenbaşy on 11 and 12 August. It proved to be a milestone for economic integration processes in this region which is of strategic importance for the OSCE.

A year ago, on 12 August 2018, the Caspian States, including Russia, signed the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea. This instrument laid the foundations for a new co-operation format, fostering a spirit of equitable utilization of the Caspian.

The Forum's main task is to supplement the multilevel system of the "Caspian Five" framework with an effective and modern mechanism for economic co-operation. This means underpinning important political decisions with specific mutually beneficial projects, including projects involving the participation of other countries. That is particularly important because the Caspian Sea is a major crossroads of trade routes, a transport junction that is being actively developed, and an energy hub. Two other areas with considerable potential are innovation and environmental protection.

The Caspian States are also countering shared challenges such as terrorism, drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, organized crime and uncontrolled migration. All these problems are of a transnational nature, and it is only by joining forces that one can tackle them effectively.

The next meeting of the Forum will take place in Astrakhan, Russia, in 2021. We would be delighted to see high-level representatives of the OSCE Secretariat among our guests on that occasion. I should mention that delegates from the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development came together in Türkmenbaşy for the inaugural Forum. The OSCE should, therefore, not remain on the sidelines of such significant processes.

Thank you for your attention.