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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1224th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 April 2019

**In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to
Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Bruce Berton**

Mr. Chairperson,

We have listened attentively to the report by the Head of Mission Bruce Berton on the work of the field presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is difficult to disagree that the situation in the host country remains challenging. At the same time, we believe that exaggerated assessments of the conditions in Bosnia are unnecessary and unjustified. The elections held in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 7 October 2018 took place in a calm atmosphere and in accordance with democratic standards. In spite of the extremely harsh exchanges between the Bosnian political parties, inter-ethnic stability is being maintained in the country. The process of forming a ruling coalition and government institutions is close to completion.

It should be recognized that one of the obstacles to the normal development of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign independent State is the continued presence of an international protectorate that has outlived its purpose. We are in favour of the earliest transfer of responsibility for the fate of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Bosnians themselves, the abolition of the Office of the High Representative, and the implementation of the agreement to that end reached in 2008 by the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council on the “5+2” agenda.

In the current circumstances, the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina are forced to act with an eye on external partners. The current election cycle is no exception. We do not agree with the attempts to link almost all problems with the policies of the leadership of Republika Srpska. On the contrary, the situation in the entity remains stable and predictable, characterized by public agreement on fundamental issues. The policy of the leaders of Republika Srpska enjoys support, as demonstrated by the results of the elections and the prompt formation of government bodies on that basis in the entity. We urge the OSCE Mission to report objectively and in a balanced fashion on the activities of the Bosnian parties.

We believe that the role of the international community should be to assist the Bosnians in building a constructive joint agenda and not to introduce additional irritants that split the society of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This refers above all to attempts to force Bosnia and Herzegovina to join NATO, contrary to the resolution on military neutrality adopted in the parliament of Republika Srpska. We believe that it is

wrong to ignore the clearly stated position of one of the Bosnian parties, which is completely consistent with the underlying principle applying to Bosnia and Herzegovina of consensus between the two entities and three constituent nations in all questions of importance for the country's development.

We stress once again that the OSCE field presence's programme and project activities should aim solely at fostering implementation of the commitments undertaken in our Organization. The OSCE Mission should not dissipate its resources on performing European-integration tasks not connected with its mandate. The main purpose of the field presence is to assist in the peaceful coexistence of the ethnic groups on the basis of the principle of mutual respect, consolidation of interconfessional harmony and tolerance in accordance with the provisions of the 1995 General Framework (Dayton) Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The OSCE Mission should be helping the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to overcome discriminatory practices in education, to prevent hate crimes, to stimulate interreligious dialogue, to counter transborder threats and to return refugees and internally displaced persons.

We expect a creative approach by the Head of Mission and his team to resolving the tasks confronting them so as to maintain the effectiveness of their work, regardless of the development of the internal political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Thank you for your attention.