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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1235th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 July 2019

In response to the address by Mr. Gent Cakaj, Acting Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, on the priorities of the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship in 2020

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Minister,

We thank you for your detailed outline of the priorities of the forthcoming Albanian OSCE Chairmanship in 2020.

On the eve of the 45th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, the OSCE remains one of the few pan-European platforms designed to ensure dialogue and co-operation among participating States even in difficult times. We continue to work in a tense international environment, characterized by growing unpredictability and confrontation. The destruction of the international legal framework in the field of arms control is progressing rapidly. Having proclaimed a policy of “containment of Russia”, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is increasing military spending and continuing the militarization of Eastern and Northern Europe. Confidence in the Euro-Atlantic area is being undermined by the misuse of sanctions and also by actions to stall the resolution of protracted conflicts. The OSCE participating States are still unable to reach agreement in the search for answers to acute humanitarian problems and transborder threats. We hope that the “spirit of the High Tatras”, created by the current OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Mr. Miroslav Lajčák at the recently concluded informal meeting of the OSCE Foreign Ministers, will reverse this trend. Today, more than ever, it is necessary to configure as far as possible the OSCE’s toolkit to de-escalate tensions and collectively respond to the common, rather than artificial, security challenges facing our countries. This is the main task of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office.

We hope that, during the Albanian Chairmanship, the efforts of our Organization will help to achieve progress in resolving the internal Ukrainian crisis. The OSCE’s work should be aimed at the full implementation by the parties to the conflict – the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk – of the Minsk Package of Measures as the sole basis for a settlement. We expect the Albanian Chairmanship to direct the OSCE representatives in the Trilateral Contact Group and the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine accordingly.

The situation in Kosovo, which has become a grey area for drug trafficking and organized crime, remains a serious challenge to European security. Instead of engaging in responsible dialogue with the

Serbian Government, the authorities in Kosovo are concerned only with aggressive self-affirmation in the region and increasing pressure on the Serbian population in the territory, undermining the long-term efforts of the international community for a peaceful settlement. We recall that United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 remains the sole basis for the settlement of the Kosovo problem and for any related international activities. We assume that, while holding the OSCE Chairmanship, Albania will approach this issue from an exclusively status-neutral position. Anything else would be a departure from the existing mandate.

There is still demand for the OSCE's contribution in the resolution of other conflicts, notably in the search for solutions relating to Transdniestria and Nagorno-Karabakh, and also in steps towards normalizing relations between Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia within the framework of the Geneva International Discussions on Security and Stability in the Trans-Caucasus.

We are still far from unleashing the potential of the Platform for Co-operative Security, which provides for the active co-operation of the OSCE with key structures in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area, including the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. It is also necessary to increase contact with OSCE Partners for Co-operation, for which the Organization has adopted sufficient regulatory frameworks.

We count on the support of dialogue frameworks already established in the OSCE, such as the Structured Dialogue. We understand that this is a lengthy process, requiring patience and the close involvement of experts. However, a comprehensive discussion on the state and prospects of European security is necessary.

We consider countering transnational threats to be a key unifying point in the first "basket". We expect the Albanian Chairmanship to maintain a high profile in the field of counter-terrorism, notably by holding a Chairmanship conference on counter-terrorism. We support the focus on the issue of foreign terrorist fighters. It is also important not to forget about the fight against terrorist ideology and the financing of terrorism, and also about strengthening inter-State co-operation in the field of counter-terrorism and the formation of a global counter-terrorism front. We fully share the desire to focus on combating organized crime. We suggest that attention be paid to the issue of combating drug trafficking. The growing relevance of this topic was confirmed by the participants in the recent anti-drug conference, organized by the Slovak Chairmanship in June. It is necessary to continue the practice of holding such popular events annually.

We are ready to continue looking for points of common interest on security topics related to information and communication technologies (ICT). It is important to implement the confidence-building measures developed within the OSCE that prevent militarization of the information space, interference in States' internal affairs and violation of their "digital" sovereignty. We consider useful the holding of specialized conferences by the Chairmanship on security in the field of ICT.

It is necessary to maintain the depoliticized nature of work in the economic and environmental dimension. The Ministerial Council meeting in Milan in December 2018 confirmed that with the political will, the unifying potential of the second "basket" could be unlocked. We have taken note of Albania's choice of combating corruption and good governance as the main theme of next year's economic and environmental dimension events. At the same time, we consider it necessary to continue work on digitalization in accordance with the Milan Ministerial Declaration on the Digital Economy as a Driver for Promoting Co-operation, Security and Growth and to consolidate the positive impact of digital transformation. We are counting on the expert potential of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Mr. Vuk Žugić. The topics of increasing energy efficiency and protecting critical energy infrastructure, and also the "clean" use of fossil energy sources and the role of renewable energy

sources, require further attention. An important area of work remains the devotion of greater attention to economic connectivity through the development of transport corridors, the alignment of integration processes in the OSCE area through the development of co-operation between the Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union, and also the implementation of the Chinese initiative “One Belt, One Road” to form the Greater Eurasian Partnership.

In order to carry out constructive work in the third “basket”, it is necessary to eliminate thematic and geographical imbalances. The activities of all OSCE institutions should be transparent and accountable to the States and conducted in accordance with the institutions’ mandates. We urge Albania to reach agreement in a timely manner on the package of human dimension events for 2020, in full compliance with the Rules of Procedure approved by all participating States. We welcome Albania’s intention to promote the themes of tolerance and non-discrimination. It is necessary to pay attention to the protection of the linguistic and educational rights of national minorities and the fight against religious discrimination, and to seek to ensure the rights of Christians, Muslims and members of other religions. The forthcoming 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 2020 is a good incentive for strengthening joint efforts to counter the glorification of Nazism, manifestations of neo-Nazism and the falsification of history. We support Albania’s focus on combating all forms of trafficking in human beings. Other important topics are the safety of journalists and the ability of journalists to work without pressure and censorship; improvement of election observation methodology; traditional values and children’s rights; elimination of Statelessness; and social, economic and cultural rights.

The effectiveness of the OSCE Chairperson-in Office as an “honest broker” depends on strict adherence to the Chairmanship’s mandate, approved at the Porto Ministerial Council meeting in 2002, and also to OSCE Permanent Council Decision No. 485 of 28 June 2002 regarding public statements on behalf of the Organization. The Chairperson builds his or her work on the basis of the consensus approaches of the participating States. The interests of individual groups of countries cannot prevail over the tasks common to the Organization as a whole. We urge the future Chairmanship to strictly adhere to this paradigm.

In conclusion, we should like to wish our Albanian colleagues effective preparations for their Chairmanship. For our part, we are open to mutually respectful dialogue and co-operation on the entire OSCE agenda.

Thank you for your attention.