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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1108th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 July 2016

**In response to the address by the  
Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria,  
Mr. Sebastian Kurz**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Minister,

We are pleased to welcome you to the Permanent Council meeting and thank you for outlining the priorities of the incoming Austrian Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2017. We shall look for possible areas of common interest of relevance to all participating States.

We take the position that a unifying agenda in the OSCE area will help to normalize relations on the continent as a counterbalance to the policy of confrontation, which, as the recent NATO summit in Warsaw showed, still seems attractive to some. All those interested in co-operation should work together to revive a culture of mutually respectful and equal dialogue.

We firmly believe that a procedure founded on the principles included in the Helsinki Decalogue remains the basis for security in the Euro-Atlantic region, but when these rules are uniformly understood by all and consistently observed. The pattern that developed after the Cold War, when those setting the rules did not observe them themselves, while forcing others to adhere strictly to them, has not functioned. Business as usual will no longer work. We have to adapt to this reality.

The Ukrainian crisis opened a new page in European history, and the OSCE has occupied an important place, worthy of the only pan-European organization with the authority to provide comprehensive solutions to security issues. We are confident that the Austrian Chairmanship will continue to provide broad-based support to the OSCE's efforts to facilitate a settlement of the internal Ukrainian conflict as part of the implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures.

We stand ready to work intensively with the future OSCE Chairmanship to assist the existing negotiation formats on a settlement of the problems of Transdnistria and

Nagorno-Karabakh, and also to promote fruitful dialogue within the framework of the Geneva International Discussions on Stability and Security in the Trans-Caucasus on the basis of the principle of status neutrality and the parties themselves having the main responsibility for working out compromise solutions.

In the long term, a sustainable stabilization of the situation requires the development of a harmonious formula for making integration processes compatible. This would relieve many of the artificially created need to be torn between East and West. The choice is as follows: it is possible to be either a bridge between them or a pendulum, which swings in one direction and then in the other, fostering a political, economic and investment-related fragmentation of the European continent.

There is a real need for synergies between the integration processes with a view to forming a common economic and humanitarian space. The OSCE could confirm its added value by providing a platform for broad, expert and political dialogue among the representatives of integration organizations.

We are ready to support intensive efforts to combat transnational threats, primarily by fighting terrorism, including the threats posed by the so-called Islamic State, the Al-Nusrah Front, extremism and illicit drug trafficking. It is essential to concentrate without any politicization and double standards on practical steps to reduce the level of the terrorist danger in the OSCE area. We propose continuing work to counter illicit drugs, in particular within the framework of existing resources to provide assistance to Afghanistan in training counter-narcotics police. The long overdue transfer of the annual conferences on combating terrorism and drug trafficking to the budget is in line with these tasks. We see no cogent arguments against this.

Terrorism cannot be eradicated without tackling its causes. The flirting with terrorist groups and an unthinking geopolitical policy in the Middle East and North Africa have led to the emergence of a power vacuum in a number of countries, making them a fertile ground for the “terrorist international”.

The protracted conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and, as a consequence, the difficult migration situation in Europe have been one of the unfortunate results of this policy. The establishment of additional channels for legal migration, the integration of migrants in the host societies, the fight against racism and xenophobia and the countering of the criminal aspects of the migration problem, including trafficking in human beings, could reduce the impact of migration challenges. The main thing, however, is to eradicate the root causes of the refugee flows.

We note the importance of co-operation with the OSCE’s partner countries. We urge that greater attention be paid to the challenges emanating from the southern Mediterranean region.

In the OSCE’s second basket of activities, we believe it important to concentrate our efforts on a defined range of practical issues – combating corruption and illegal migration, improving the investment climate and strengthening economic connectivity. The business conference organized by the German Chairmanship in May in Berlin calls for further steps to increase economic connectivity.

The work in the area of human rights requires a complete rethink. We cannot allow humanitarian problems to be used as an instrument of political pressure. This is not only uncondusive to promoting human rights and freedoms or enhancing the profile of democratic institutions, but on the contrary leads to their discredit. It is important to ensure constructive discussion and agreement on a package of humanitarian events, including the organizational modalities. The task of further optimizing the human dimension remains relevant. An erosion of the intergovernmental nature of our Organization is inadmissible and calls for particular attention.

As far as the issues within the human dimension are concerned, we believe it necessary to give priority attention to protecting children, ensuring socio-economic rights, developing interpersonal contacts, including in the cultural sphere, safeguarding freedom of movement, countering contemporary forms of racism, including neo-Nazism, aggressive nationalism, intolerance and xenophobia, preventing discrimination against Christians and Muslims, promoting interreligious dialogue, reducing statelessness, combating trafficking in human beings and elaborating uniform rules for election observation.

We firmly believe that intercultural harmony can be consolidated by drawing on universal moral principles and traditional values of humanity.

The practice of recent years shows that for the work of the OSCE and its institutions to be effective, there is a need not so much for material resources as for a readiness to work pragmatically, focusing on the achievement of practical results that are in the interests of all States and not just a limited group.

If we are to enhance the OSCE's role in global affairs, we need to step up the work to strengthen its organizational and legal character. The pillars on which its effectiveness is based are its intergovernmental nature, its inclusive membership and the consensus rule. The OSCE must not drift towards becoming a disorganized forum of arbitrarily selected representatives of civil society.

Minister,

Now Europe is in fact faced with a choice as to what kind of development model the continent will follow – positive or confrontational. Will our efforts in this historic period lead to a consolidation of the European and Eurasian areas or, on the contrary, to their weakening? Co-operation and dialogue in the OSCE can help to tip the balance in the right direction. We are counting on the readiness of the future Austrian Chairmanship to work intensively and flexibly in close contact with all participating States.

In conclusion, I should like once again to thank the Minister for outlining his thoughts, and also through him the Austrian authorities for the hospitality and assistance that they unfliningly offer our Organization.

Thank you for your attention.