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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE  
1324th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 July 2021

**In response to the presentation of the priorities of the Polish OSCE Chairmanship in  
2022 by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Mr. Zbigniew Rau**

Mr. Minister,

We thank you for your detailed outline of the priorities of the forthcoming Polish OSCE Chairmanship in 2022. What you had to say today was very interesting. I want to state from the outset that we actively support your call for changes. They are overdue. And we know how to launch that process, that is, the reform process. The political will is there in Russia; we shall be actively working on it. However, I wish to caution that if the logic of confrontation prevails – and we have seen how some colleagues typically start sowing the seeds of confrontation as soon as they can – then the OSCE platform will continue to forfeit its significance and ability to offer reliable joint solutions to contemporary challenges and threats.

You mentioned Napoleon. Well, I wish to recall Peter the Great and, going even farther back, Alexander Nevsky, who both pushed Russia towards Europe. I hope there will be an opportunity for us to have an interesting chat on historical topics.

Poland will soon be standing at the helm of our Organization, and what is more – this is no exaggeration – at a critical time for us all. The extent to which the Polish Government is successful in rallying the participating States around unifying ideas and returning to a culture where compromises are worked out collectively will, in many ways, decide whether or not the OSCE can be preserved as an instrument for ensuring peace and stability.

Demand for the OSCE among the participating States will to a considerable degree depend on the extent to which we are able, through joint efforts, to enhance the quality of its work and restore to the Organization its role as an effective platform for discussing and identifying responses to acute contemporary problems of a pan-European scale. We call upon the future Polish Chairmanship to include the task of enhancing the OSCE's effectiveness among the priority issues for 2022.

Today it is essential to consolidate all our efforts in order to halt the massive degradation of the political climate in the Euro-Atlantic area and put the multilateral engagement of States back on the track of constructive co-operation. Restoring trust and regaining predictability in politico-military processes in the

OSCE area must remain among our absolute priorities. We hope that, among other things, the work of the Forum for Security Co-operation will be geared towards this.

We expect our Organization to continue making a contribution to the settlement of regional conflicts by peaceful diplomatic means. All the tools required for this are available.

Given the challenging situation in the South Caucasus, there is a need for assistance with the further steps involved in tackling the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh. The main thing is to normalize the situation in the region, address acute humanitarian challenges and establish conditions for building a sustainable political and economic future for the region. And that is indeed the path marked out by the trilateral statements by the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia in 2020 and 2021.

We are convinced that the Geneva International Discussions on Security and Stability in the Trans-Caucasus will remain a sought-after platform for supporting direct dialogue between Georgia, on the one hand, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia, on the other. We welcome the active participation of the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in the work being done under this format.

Efforts are required to inject additional momentum into the Transdniestrian settlement process and ensure a regular pattern of negotiations in the “5+2” format irrespective of political circumstances in the region.

The foundation for the OSCE’s work with regard to Kosovo continues to be a status-neutral approach based on United Nations Security Council resolution 1244.

We expect our Organization to continue undertaking efforts to facilitate a peaceful settlement of the internal Ukrainian conflict on the basis of full implementation by the conflict parties – that is, the central authorities in Kyiv and the representatives of certain areas of Donbas – of their obligations under the Minsk agreements and, above all, under the Package of Measures, which was endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202. We call for the resources of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine to be directed at comprehensive and balanced monitoring of the security situation in Donbas and of civilian casualties, and also at analysing and promoting respect for human rights throughout Ukraine, including the linguistic, educational, religious and cultural rights of the Russian-speaking population and national minorities.

We trust that you will succeed in maintaining the OSCE’s high profile in countering a range of new challenges and threats. Combating the terrorist threat is of paramount importance. The coronavirus pandemic has clearly demonstrated the need for additional efforts against the spread of terrorist ideology, not least on the Internet. It is necessary to block financial and material support for terrorists, break the nexus between terrorism and organized crime, and focus on the problem of foreign terrorist fighters. We view the fight against violent extremism solely from the angle of counter-terrorism, with the leading role being played by national governments. Non-State actors can carry out only auxiliary functions and should not substitute for the efforts of specialized State structures.

We call upon the future Polish Chairmanship to accord the closest attention to the fight against drug trafficking. The latter poses a threat to the security of every participating State. Despite the OSCE’s existing mandate and solid potential in this area, opportunities are not being made use of sufficiently. Since the Declaration on the OSCE Activities in Support of Global Efforts in Tackling the World Drug Problem was signed by the Belgrade Ministerial Council in 2015, not a single further document on this subject has been adopted by our Organization – this despite the fact that there have been at least two relevant landmark events

at the United Nations level: the special session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2016 and the ministerial-level review in 2019. We hope that this omission can still be rectified.

We are prepared to carry on looking for common ground with respect to the security of information and communication technologies. It is necessary to continue implementing the confidence-building measures developed here to reduce the risks of conflicts in cyberspace. The expertise built up at the OSCE in the field of cybersecurity may be said to be quite unique globally. It is currently being adopted by other regional structures, such as the Organization of American States and the ASEAN Regional Forum (dealing with security). It is important not to slacken the pace and to look for new fields in which this accumulated experience can be applied.

We consider the practice of holding cross-cutting thematic conferences in the first “basket” to be extremely helpful for sharing experience, developing consolidated approaches and establishing a unifying agenda. We trust that at these events the foundations will also be laid for ministerial decisions next year.

As far as the economic and environmental dimension is concerned, the post-pandemic economic recovery of countries is currently the most pressing issue. We welcome the Polish Government’s intention to devote the cycle of meetings of the Economic and Environmental Forum in 2022 to this matter. We believe that the OSCE as the largest regional organization implementing a comprehensive approach to security can and should help to tackle this global challenge.

Attention needs to be paid to overcoming the severe social consequences of the pandemic associated with people losing their jobs and suffering a reduction in their income. It is important to consider ways of restoring suspended trade and transport links along with forms of providing assistance to the sectors affected worst, such as the tourism industry. In so doing, it is necessary to draw on the concepts of connectivity, integration and facilitation of trade and transport that are reflected in many OSCE commitments.

We attach a significant role to environmental issues, that is, to reducing the negative impact of human beings on the environment, enhancing energy efficiency, the transition to cleaner sources of energy, and the rational use of natural resources.

Moreover, consistency and coherence should be shown in the approaches used. It is necessary to continue work under the second “basket” in such areas as tackling corruption, developing the digital economy, and preventing natural and human-caused disasters. Objectively, the significance of international scientific and technical co-operation is growing. In health care and medicine, this refers first and foremost to combating the spread of the coronavirus infection. Commitments related to science and technology were laid down as long ago as the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. To invoke the notion advanced by the Swedish Chairmanship, I would say that the time has come to go “back to basics”.

We insist on thematic and geographical imbalances in the human dimension being eliminated. As before, the most urgent pending task is to reform that “basket”, which is the most politicized one. The work of the executive structures should become more transparent and accountable to the States, and it should be carried out in accordance with their mandates.

We hope that the Polish Chairmanship will succeed, in good time and in line with the established procedures, in achieving agreement on a “package” of events for 2022. We count on the Polish Government to play a more active role in developing the agenda of the Human Dimension Committee.

In view of the pandemic, paramount significance should be attached to the protection of economic and social rights. Moreover, it is not a question of formally placing such issues on the human dimension agenda but, rather, of doing serious and systematic work.

We take note of your intention to promote freedom of religion and the defence of Christians. In that respect, we once again recall the task set at the 2014 OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Basel of preparing Ministerial Council declarations on combating Christianophobia and Islamophobia.

It is necessary to step up efforts to combat the glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and the falsification of history. I agree with you that historical aspects need to be discussed. It is important to counter racism and xenophobia. Adequate protection must be provided for the linguistic and educational rights of national minorities and other ethnic groups. The topic of media freedom should include aspects related to the safety of journalists and free access to information. Due attention needs to be paid to the rights of the child, the elimination of statelessness, and non-interference in private and family life. Combating all forms of trafficking in human beings, notably for sexual exploitation or the removal of human organs, tissues and cells, must remain a priority. Ensuring freedom of peaceful assembly also remains as relevant as ever. This is not the first year that Russia and other participating States have raised the issue of developing a consensus methodology for election observation.

Mr. Minister,

We expect Poland to perform its Chairmanship functions as an “honest broker”, that is, taking into account the interests of all participating States, and not to succumb, under the influence of Euro-Atlantic esprit de corps, to the temptation of dividing countries according to whether or not they are “one of us”. We hope that the future Chairmanship will display political sagacity and halt the process whereby the OSCE is losing its autonomy in tackling many topical issues in its geographical area of responsibility. If we continue delegating the formulation of approaches and the adoption of key decisions to other centres of power, being content with merely rubber-stamping these as it were, then our Organization is doomed to extinction. After all, the OSCE was not conceived as an appendage of some other entity or as a mechanism for advancing narrow bloc-based interests.

We urge you and our Polish colleagues to adhere most carefully to the mandate of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office as laid down in the relevant decision of the Porto Ministerial Council in 2002. A further key point of reference is Permanent Council Decision No. 485 of 28 June 2002, which regulates public statements on behalf of the Organization.

In closing, I should like to wish you personally, Mr. Minister, and all our Polish partners success in preparing for your responsibilities in 2022, assembling a professional Chairmanship team and drawing up a rich and balanced programme of events.

Thank you for your attention.