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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1202nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 November 2018

On the development of the situation in Macedonia

Mr. Chairperson,

We are concerned at the agreement in the Parliament of Macedonia under outside pressure to start the procedure for the amendments to the Constitution required to change the country's name and for entry into NATO.

We recall that the procedure for amending the basic law of the country began following the failure of the referendum on 30 September. The people of Macedonia "voted with their feet", essentially declining to support the renaming of the country. Moreover, the manipulative phrasing of the question in the plebiscite effectively compromised the very idea of Macedonia's European and Euro-Atlantic integration. The boycott of the referendum by the overwhelming majority of Macedonians clearly demonstrates the absence of public consensus regarding the imposition of strategic aims.

Information from the OSCE Mission to Skopje raises doubts as to whether the vote on 19 October in the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia to amend the Constitution is in accordance with democratic standards. At least three of the eight votes needed for the adoption came from opposition deputies who just happened to have been released from detention on that day. Two others under investigation by the special prosecutor were promised freedom in return for "voting the right way". The Macedonian media also reported on attempts to bribe deputies.

The opposition was subject to overt pressure after the vote in Parliament as well, specifically by way of criminal proceedings against dissenters. The aim was to obtain up to 25 opposition votes in support of changes to the Constitution that were not accepted by the people. They acted, it would appear, on the principle that the end justifies the means. Evidently, the preliminary investigation launched on 30 October of the President of Macedonia Gjorge Ivanov, who, by the power vested in him, disputes the compliance of the legislative initiatives with the country's Constitution, should also be considered in that context.

We are not surprised at the absence of an international reaction to the massive coercion exerted on dissenters in Macedonia. We well remember how on the eve of the referendum on 30 September leading politicians from NATO and European Union countries participated directly in the propaganda campaign, brazenly interfering in the internal affairs of this Balkan country. Some agitators from the Western assault unashamedly called their mission a “diplomatic offensive”. We are also aware of the “hands-on management” of the vote in Parliament on 19 October by the Ambassador of the United States of America, who was in the room right up to the end of the meeting.

We call on the United States and the European Union to stop flagrantly interfering in the internal affairs in Skopje, something that has become a regular habit since 2016, and ignoring the will of two-thirds of Macedonians and to renounce their support of the Prespa Agreement.

The decision on the name of the Macedonian State should be determined on a legal foundation on the basis of widespread support and should not split society. We expect the matter of the name of the Republic of Macedonia in accordance with paragraph 3 of United Nations Security Council resolution 845 to be considered by the UN Security Council.

Thank you for your attention.