

PC.DEL/345/17

16 March 2017

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1137th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

16 March 2017

**In response to the address by the
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Macedonia,
Mr. Nikola Poposki**

Mr. Chairperson,
Deputy Prime Minister,

We are pleased to welcome to today's Permanent Council meeting the distinguished Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Macedonia, Mr. Nikola Poposki. For us it is important to receive first-hand information on the efforts being made in the country to overcome the protracted internal political crisis.

Almost two years have elapsed since you last addressed this room on 11 June 2015. On that occasion, you presented to us the agreements reached by the leaders of the political parties through the mediation of the European Union and the United States of America. All those who cared about the fate of Macedonia pinned their main hopes for a way out of the situation on the agreement that later became known as the Pržino Agreement. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Not only has the crisis failed to abate, but there is a threat that it will spread.

The Macedonian authorities have in fact demonstrated their responsibility and a desire to stabilize the situation in the country and reach a compromise in the interests of the entire nation. The Macedonian Government has carried out a range of measures with a view to reforming the electoral legislation and strengthening the guarantees for freedom of the media and the independence of the judiciary. The legitimate government in office at that time stepped down voluntarily. Representatives of the opposition were included in the transitional government. A special prosecutor was appointed to investigate the validity of information disseminated at that time on possible high-profile crimes.

The early parliamentary elections scheduled for April 2016, during which the Macedonian citizens could directly express their own opinion on the events taking place, should have put an end to the national crisis. As you know, the elections did not take place in April or in June. Under pressure from the EU and the United States, which took the initiative

and volunteered to facilitate the search for an internal political compromise, they were postponed twice. The crisis dragged on. The opposition appealed massively to the people on the street in an attempt to secure a privileged position for themselves, exert pressure on the authorities and attract new supporters. Ever more ultimatums were issued. The opposition tried to avoid dialogue with the authorities in Parliament. And the Pržino Agreement was merely used to secure unilateral concessions from the authorities in Skopje, with the full connivance of the opposition and their unconstructive policy.

As a result, parliamentary elections were held only on 11 December 2016. Despite large-scale support from the EU and the United States, the result once again did not go in the opposition's favour. The citizens of Macedonia gave the ruling party the majority. The opposition's attempts to undermine the situation in the country did not find support among the electorate.

Now, contrary to the will of the Macedonian people, the politicians who lost the election are attempting to gain power in Skopje using the Albanian minority. There is unprecedented pressure on Gjorge Ivanov, the President of an independent country. No time is lost in giving the domestic political process an inter-ethnic hue, forcing the "Tirana platform" ultimatum on the Macedonian people – an openly provocative document intended to undermine the constitutional foundations of Macedonia and, what is more, a document put together with the direct involvement of the head of the Albanian Government. There is a clear desire to put the Albanian population of the country in a privileged position. A cause for major concern is the fact that the so-called head of the Kosovo quasi-State entity is also interfering in the process of forming the Macedonian Government by inflaming nationalistic passions. And what about the rest of the people who live in Macedonia? How does this correspond to the provisions of the Ohrid Framework Agreement? We believe that such initiatives, which clearly involve a component of Greater Albanian ideology, deserve unequivocal condemnation. So far we have not heard any statements to that effect.

With Macedonia's complex ethnic and religious structure, the provoking of inter-ethnic tension in the country in order to achieve short-term domestic policy goals is extremely dangerous not only for that country but also for the entire region. One need only recall the armed incidents involving Kosovo Albanians in Macedonia's border areas with Kosovo – the attack on Macedonian border guards in Gošince on 21 April 2015 by a group of armed men in uniforms bearing Kosovo Liberation Army insignia, and the gunfight in Kumanovo on 9 and 10 May 2015 between security forces and a terrorist group that had entered the country from Kosovo. At that time, no one in the OSCE was able to provide an objective assessment of the extremists' actions. Mind you, it would not hurt to call a spade a spade.

We agree that, given the current volatile conditions, it is important that the political forces in Macedonia and in the neighbouring countries show responsibility and avoid playing the ethnic card and imposing a false picture of the causes and nature of the crisis in that Balkan State. Interference in the internal political processes of an OSCE participating State is inadmissible, no matter how well-intentioned the reasons for doing so. Such steps undermine the authority of the OSCE and run counter to the mandates of the OSCE institutions agreed upon at an inter-State level. It is especially important to take this into account in public assessments, which are governed by Permanent Council Decision No. 485 of 2002 on public statements by the Organization's representatives.

We repeat that it is necessary to put a stop to external interference in the internal affairs of Macedonia and to respect the right of the Macedonian citizens to decide for themselves their own future in accordance with fundamental democratic principles. We call on all political forces in Macedonia and the external mediators from the EU and the United States to pursue a settlement of the intra-Macedonian situation through dialogue within the existing legal democratic procedures with respect for the actions and decisions of the legitimate authorities, guided by the goal of restoring stability and social harmony in Macedonia.

Thank you for your attention.