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PC.DEL/5/20
9 January 2020

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1254th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

9 January 2020

**On the presentation of the priorities of the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE and
Prime Minister of Albania, Mr. Edi Rama**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Chairperson-in-Office,

We thank you for the detailed presentation of the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship's priorities. Much of what we have heard is encouraging. We trust that you will be able to continue the efforts of the Slovak Chairmanship in strengthening the unifying and collective principles of our Organization.

Your country is taking over the watch of this Organization at a difficult time, when, against the backdrop of growing mistrust in the Euro-Atlantic region, key international legal instruments in the field of arms control are being dismantled. NATO continues to increase its military activities on its "eastern flank". The movement towards building inter-State relations based on the principle of equal and indivisible security has ground to a halt. The formation of a common economic and humanitarian space from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean has stalled. The current spiralling of dangerous tensions in the Asian region on the very borders of the OSCE area is also complicating the situation.

The policy of a number of countries of using illegal sanctions to gain a competitive advantage is alarming. The selective application of human rights mechanisms and the deepening of the crisis of values in Europe continue. The wounds of many inter-ethnic conflicts are still bleeding.

In view of the European security crisis, the importance of the OSCE is growing demonstrably. We expect the Albanian Chairmanship to make co-ordinated efforts to restore the trust that has been undermined and take carefully considered steps to rectify the politico-military situation and find consensus-based solutions to the problems facing us all. It is vital to expand the OSCE's contacts with the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and other multilateral organizations on the basis of the Platform for Co-operative Security.

We are counting on a contribution to the settlement of the crisis in Ukraine. Despite increased activity in the Trilateral Contact Group, the situation is far from ideal. We urge that every effort be made to facilitate direct dialogue between the representatives of the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk.

We expect Ms. Heidi Grau to do her utmost to facilitate the parties' implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures.

Urgent attention needs to be paid to achieving a sustainable ceasefire and the disengagement of forces and hardware in new areas, with the prospect of this process being extended to the entire line of contact. These steps should be accompanied by the full and unconditional implementation of the Minsk political provisions. The Ukrainian Government needs to consolidate the special status of Donbas on a permanent basis with the introduction of the relevant constitutional amendments, implement the "Steinmeier formula" in Ukrainian legislation, provide an amnesty for those involved in the events in Donbas and reach agreement with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk on the modalities for holding local elections.

We expect the Albanian Chairmanship to ensure the impartial and effective work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, and the Mission itself to conduct balanced monitoring of the situation across the territory of Ukraine. The relevant institutions of our Organization need to work more closely with the Ukrainian Government to prevent it from violating its OSCE commitments.

Stagnation in other conflict areas is inadmissible. A way should be found out of the impasse in the search for a political solution to the Kosovo problem on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244. We are ready to contribute to the Chairmanship's efforts in the Transdniestrian and Nagorno-Karabakh settlement processes and in maintaining dialogue between Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia within the Geneva International Discussions on Security in the Trans-Caucasus. We wish the new Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the Transdniestrian Settlement Process, Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, every success in his work.

We regard countering transnational threats as a key unifying element in the first "basket". We assume that the Albanian Chairmanship will maintain the OSCE's high counter-terrorism profile, notably by holding key thematic events. Combating terrorist ideology and its sources of financing and strengthening inter-State co-operation should remain the focus of attention here.

We support the Albanian Government's intention to focus on the problem of returning foreign terrorist fighters. It is important to take a balanced approach to their social adjustment, rehabilitation and reintegration. These measures should be carried out in close conjunction with the criminal prosecution of foreign terrorist fighters and ensuring the principle of the unavoidability of punishment for crimes committed.

We share Albania's desire to set about countering organized crime in a meaningful way. We propose paying serious attention to combating drug trafficking. We welcome the plans to hold the traditional anti-drug conference this summer.

We are also ready to continue looking for common ground on the topic of information and communication technology security. It is necessary to implement the confidence-building measures elaborated within the OSCE to reduce the risk of conflicts arising in this sphere, thereby preventing the militarization of the information space, interference in the internal affairs of States and violations of their digital sovereignty. We consider the practice of holding relevant Chairmanship conferences to be useful.

Preserving the depoliticized nature of the second "basket" remains an important task. We support the choice of countering corruption as the main theme for the 28th Economic and Environmental Forum. We are looking forward to constructive discussions during its first preparatory meeting on 17 and 18 February in Vienna. We are open to a professional discussion of the anti-corruption issue, particularly in the context of the use of digital technologies.

We are counting on the expert support of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Mr. Vuk Žugić. There is a need for close co-operation with the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Corruption, Ms. Paola Severino. We are focused on fruitful work on constructive issues such as the development of Eurasian trade and transport connectivity, the simplification of customs and border procedures in the interests of aligning integration processes in the OSCE area, and the formation of a Greater Eurasian Partnership.

We expect the Albanian Chairmanship to take a constructive approach to the human dimension. We need to concentrate on eliminating thematic and geographical imbalances and depoliticizing the third “basket”. The work of the OSCE institutions should be transparent and accountable to the States, and carried out in accordance with their mandates. We urge the Albanian Chairmanship to agree in good time on a package of human dimension events for 2020.

We share your view, Mr. Chairperson-in-Office, regarding the “surge in hate crimes and hate speech throughout the OSCE region”. Greater attention should be paid to protecting the linguistic and educational rights of ethnic groups and national minorities. We need to finally implement the 2014 Basel Ministerial Council mandate regarding the elaboration of declarations condemning discrimination against Christians and Muslims. We expect a contribution to this by the three Personal Representatives on tolerance.

We support the Albanian Government’s intention to work more intensively on combating trafficking in human beings and violence against women. In the context of trafficking we should not forget such aspects as sexual exploitation, including the exploitation of children, and trafficking in human beings for the purpose of removing human organs, tissues and cells.

Other pressing topics include combating the shameful phenomenon of mass statelessness, children’s rights, traditional values, social and economic rights, discrimination in sport, the safety of journalists and public access to information. The improvement of election observation methodology and the development of common consensus-based principles in this regard are long overdue.

We welcome the Chairmanship’s attention to the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. We should like to remind you that this year will mark the 75th anniversary of the victory in the Second World War. Particular emphasis therefore needs to be given to combating the glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism, the falsification of history and attempts to revise the judgments of the Nuremberg Tribunal.

We are in favour of stepping up co-operation with the OSCE Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

Mr. Chairperson-in-Office,

The Albanian Government’s decision to assume the Chairmanship at such a difficult time for the OSCE and global politics undoubtedly entails great responsibility. Wisdom, flexibility and meticulousness will be required from Albanian diplomacy in moving towards our common goals and upholding our common principles. We trust that the Chairmanship will adhere strictly to its mandate, play the role of an honest broker and not deviate from consensus-based and status-neutral approaches, acting strictly in accordance with the 2002 Porto Ministerial Council decision on the role of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office and Permanent Council Decision No. 485 of 2002 on OSCE statements and public information.

I should like to wish our Albanian colleagues every success in carrying out this difficult mission and confirm Russia's readiness for constructive work.

Thank you for your attention.