

PC.DEL/1578/18
21 December 2018

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1210th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

20 December 2018

On the creation of the “armed forces” of Kosovo

Mr. Chairperson,

We share the concern of our Serbian colleagues at the latest decisions by the authorities in Priština. The package of laws adopted on 14 December by the Kosovo Assembly on transforming the Kosovo Security Force into “armed forces” is a gross violation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 and a threat to peace and security in the Western Balkans.

The creation of a “Kosovo army” undermines the long-standing international efforts to resolve the Kosovo problem and effectively excludes the possibility of a political compromise between the authorities in Belgrade and Priština on a basis acceptable to both sides.

This step greatly increases the likelihood of renewed bloodshed in the Western Balkans. The militant anti-Serbian statements by the Kosovo Albanian leadership and the acts of violence regularly committed in recent times by the special police units in the Serb-populated districts in the north of the territory leave no doubt as to whom the “Kosovo army” will be used against. This is the latest example of intimidation of the Kosovo Serbs based on the logic of ethnic cleansing.

The actions of the authorities in Priština are particularly offensive in view of the responsible and restrained reaction to these events by Serbia’s leadership, its appeals to the Kosovo Serbs to remain calm and not to react to provocations, and its sincere desire to reduce tension exclusively by diplomatic means.

It is quite obvious that the authorities in Priština have been encouraged in this new provocation thanks to the irresponsible support given to them by the United States of America and the European Union. In supporting the creation of the Kosovo “armed forces”, the US Government consistently ignores not only commitments under international law but also the opinion of many of its NATO allies. Without waiting for the decision of the Kosovo Assembly, the United States has already sent 24 Humvee multipurpose armoured vehicles to

the Kosovo Albanians. Supplies of “lethal weapons” to the authorities in Priština are in the pipeline. We have also repeatedly drawn attention to the training of Albanian Kosovo Security Force personnel, evidently for their subsequent transformation into a proper “army”, at the Bondsteel camp, which was set up for peacekeeping purposes in fulfilment of UN Security Council resolution 1244. This is taking place with the involvement of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in violation of its mandate.

The ill-defined position of the European Union, which has taken upon itself the role of mediator in the negotiations between the authorities in Belgrade and Priština in accordance with the UN General Assembly decision, has once again been a disappointment. It is becoming increasingly evident that the officials in Brussels are willing to continue closing their eyes to any violation by the authorities in Kosovo of international law and agreements with Serbia. This completely discredits the mediating efforts of the EU, which bears great responsibility not only for the impasse in the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo but also for the possible consequences of the militarization of Kosovo. In reality, the EU has been a complete failure as a mediator.

We are also surprised that the OSCE has not deemed it necessary to respond to the provocative step by the authorities in Priština. Once again the desire to gloss over the complete disdain shown by Kosovo and its Western supporters for international law has predominated. Such an approach will not increase the credibility of our Organization.

The creation of the “armed forces of Kosovo” is no less destructive than the unilateral declaration of independence by the authorities in Priština. The precedent of Kosovo could well have dangerous ramifications for the situation in other conflict regions. However much its sponsors would like it to be, Kosovo will never be the proverbial “special case”.

We firmly believe that the illegal decision by the authorities in Priština, which is even contrary to Kosovo’s constitution, should be immediately repealed. We urge Kosovo’s Western supporters to see that this is done. In the event that the plans for creating a Kosovo “army” are implemented, then according to paragraph 9(b) of UN Security Council resolution 1244 KFOR is required to take immediate and conclusive measures to demilitarize and disband any armed Kosovo Albanian units.

Thank you for your attention.