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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1088th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 February 2016

**On the early elections in Macedonia**

Mr. Chairperson,

We take note of the Macedonian authorities' responsible approach to preparing for the early parliamentary elections scheduled for 24 April 2016, the aim of which is to put an end to prolonged friction in the country's domestic politics.

Since independence, the Macedonian Government has garnered considerable experience of holding election campaigns compliant with recognized democratic standards and under international observation, including that of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. It is revealing that the Office did not lodge any serious complaints about the quality of the organization in the wake of the last elections in 2014. Moreover, it is noted in the Office's Needs Assessment Mission Report on the results of the work in Skopje, dated 2–5 November 2015, that over the previous six months, special amendments had been made to legislation on elections and the authorities and opposition had together covered most of the remaining recommendations which were yet to be approved, including out-of-country voting, the format and competences of the State Election Commission, media coverage, campaign finance regulations, electoral dispute resolution, and safeguards to protect against pressure on voters and the abuse of State resources.

It is therefore already possible to see that the country is creating the necessary conditions for self-determination. We hope that the upcoming elections will be peaceful ones.

We trust that external forces too will treat the existing procedures of constitutional law in Macedonia with respect. We view attempts by representatives of third parties to exert an influence on the Macedonian Government as counter-productive, as they groundlessly take up the role of adjudicating the willingness of authorities of an independent State to hold an election campaign. Nobody has granted them these powers.

We hope that the people of Macedonia, who are our friends, will be able to make an independent choice that the international community will respect.

Thank you for your attention.