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PRANË ORGANIZATAVE  
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PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA  
TO THE INTERNATIONAL  
ORGANIZATIONS  
VIENNA

**Statement of the Delegation of Albania,  
In response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to  
Serbia, Ambassador Peter Burkhard**

**As delivered by the Permanent Representative, Ambassador  
Roland Bimo, at the 1090th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent  
Council, 18 February 2016**

Thank you Mr. Chairperson,

Albania joins others in warmly welcoming Ambassador Burkhard, Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, back to the Permanent Council. We thank him for his comprehensive and forward-looking report.

While aligning ourselves with the statement delivered by the European Union, allow me a few remarks in a national capacity.

We highly appreciate the Mission`s engagement and its work during 2015.

Congratulations to Serbia`s progress along the EU path. In opening of the first two EU accession negotiation chapters, we see also the added value and contribution of the Mission.

Developing fruitful bilateral relations with Serbia constitutes a key priority of Albania`s regional policy. Aware of the importance of our relations for peace and stability in the Western Balkans, we are interested in engaging with Serbia in an open and frank political dialogue aimed at creating a climate of mutual confidence, trust and respect.

We are confident that the exchange of high-level bilateral visits, agreements in the fields of economic development, free movement of citizens, youth and higher education representatives are expressions of the readiness to deepen ties and cooperation. They provide ample opportunities to engage on substantial issues and exploit the full potential of our cooperation.

I want to commend the support of the Mission, that in close co-operation with the Presence in Albania, helped implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Youth Co-operation signed between Albania and Serbia in late 2014, by facilitating mutual youth exchanges.

Enhancing understanding and friendship among young people in the region through educational, cultural and humanitarian activities, fostering intercultural dialogue between the young people must be a priority of our organization and OSCE Missions in the region. The Regional Youth Cooperation Office in the Western Balkans will create synergies on this issue.

We appreciate the role in promoting stability in the multi-ethnic areas of south and southwest Serbia, and encourage the Mission to continue to maintain its focus on integrating national minorities into public life and improving their access to public services.

We commend the role of the Mission in encouraging the dialogue between central authorities and local representatives in the Presevo Valley. Albania expects the OSCE Mission in Serbia to fully play its facilitating and mediating role in the ongoing dialogue, regarding the implementation of the seven point common Plan, agreed upon by both sides on 25 February 2013.

We regret that Consultations between ethnic Albanian political leaders and the central government, on the agreed seven-point Plan, did not resume during 2015.

We appreciate the Mission's long-standing engagement in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the multi-lingual Economics Department in Bujanovac and the official inauguration of a newly built modern building.

But we see with concern the issue of school textbooks in the Albanian language in south Serbia. Approximately 40 percent of primary school textbooks are lacking, while there are no approved textbooks in Albanian at the secondary school level, except for four Albanian high school literature textbooks that were approved by the Ministry of Education in January 2016.

Albania appreciates the progress of the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia facilitated by EU and expects full implementation and in good-faith, of all legal obligations arising from the agreements reached between them.

In this respect we fully support the suggestion of the EU, that the Mission to Serbia, within its mandate, to consider whether it can also play a role in supporting the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue.

Mr. Chairman,

We highly appreciate the dialogue, but for us it is unacceptable, what amounts to hate speech, used time and again by some high politicians in Serbia, often including insults against Kosovo and Albanians in general. In this context the mission can offer its contribution.

With regard to planned elections in 2016, we urge the Mission to pay special attention to the electoral processes in the national minorities' areas, allowing them to exercise their fundamental democratic right, the right to vote, not to repeat situations like those during local elections in Presevo Velly, where voters were not allowed to vote by being blocked at the border between Serbia and Kosovo.

At the end, reiterating Albanian delegation's support to Ambassador Burkhard and his team, we wish them every success in the future.

Thank You Mr. Chairman.