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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1112th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 September 2016

**In response to the statement by the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo,
Mr. Jean-Claude Schlumberger**

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome Mr. Jean-Claude Schlumberger, Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, and thank him for his detailed report on the situation in the territory and the results of the field presence's work over the past six months.

The situation in Kosovo and Metohija does not inspire optimism. Despite the extensive international assistance programmes of recent years, a real turnaround in the negative trends developing in this Serbian territory remains elusive. On the contrary, heightened confrontation between the local political parties vying for power and taking a gamble on nationalistic slogans is provoking a new spiral of inter-ethnic tension in Kosovo.

Against this background, the process of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to the territory is effectively stymied. The rights of the non-Albanian communities in the territory in areas such as education, health care, employment and the media are being systematically violated. It has not been possible to remedy the situation with respect to ensuring their security or to restore property rights and freedom of movement. Discrimination continues on the basis of language. The non-Albanian population, especially the Serbs, are still the main target of manifestations of intolerance accompanied by violence and physical threats.

The situation in the territory attests to Priština's inability to guarantee equal security to all the peoples living in the territory and for that matter to its connivance in preventing the return of all refugees and IDPs to Kosovo, and yet without this there can be no talk of reconciliation in the territory.

We believe that the OSCE Mission should focus more closely on the problem of ensuring in practice equal rights for the territory's population, paying greater attention to monitoring the return process, promoting intercommunity dialogue and preventing

manifestations of hatred, including through the establishment within the field presence of a special expert group and through regular reports on this to the participating States.

We have noted the Kosovo authorities' declared intention to improve their effectiveness in combating organized crime, corruption, money laundering and the illicit arms trade. We trust that the investigations launched by the local law enforcement authorities with the support of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo will be brought to a logical conclusion and will help to strengthen the rule of law and law and order in the territory. There are as yet no real grounds for saying that the Kosovo local authorities will be able to deal with these major tasks on their own; not to mention the problems of the spread of radical and extremist sentiments in the territory, and of drug trafficking and trafficking in human beings. We are in favour of stepping up external support to the Kosovo police within the framework of the OSCE Mission. The continued existence of a grey zone in the middle of Europe for international crime and terrorism poses a grave threat that extends far beyond the Western Balkans.

Priština's irresponsible attitude to political dialogue with Belgrade under EU mediation on which we place hopes for the stabilization of the situation in the territory explodes the myth about a certain "maturity" on the part of Kosovo. The Kosovo authorities continue blatantly to hinder the implementation of the key agreement on the establishment of the Community of Serb Municipalities in Kosovo, unilaterally attaching additional conditions to its implementation. We call on the EU, which assumed a mediation role in accordance with the United Nations General Assembly resolution of 9 September 2010, to implement impartially and in good faith the commitments it has undertaken, ensuring that Priština implements the agreements reached.

There are continued attempts, despite appeals by the international community, to drag out the establishment of a special international court for the investigation of serious crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army. The special court needs to begin work as soon as possible, preventing the destruction of evidence and the neutralization of witnesses to the crimes, so that the perpetrators are punished regardless of the position they currently hold.

Overall, despite blatant attempts to gloss over the scale of the problems in Kosovo, the OSCE Mission's observations confirm that the situation in the Serbian territory of Kosovo and Metohija is still far from stable and predictable, and requires the close attention of the international community. An example of the flimsiness of the so-called Kosovo "statehood" is the systematic use by the nationalists of the self-determination movement of violence not only on the streets but also in parliament, where radicals have repeatedly used tear gas to force the authorities to change the agenda of meetings. The OSCE Mission should continue its work in full and in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 1244, which remains the international legal basis for a Kosovo settlement that is binding for all, on the basis of the key task of promoting inter-ethnic reconciliation and mutual respect, and the establishment within the territory of a viable multi-ethnic society where the rights of each citizen are fully and equally respected.

In response to the proposal made by a group of OSCE participating States regarding the participation in the Permanent Council's thematic meetings of representatives of the Kosovo authorities responsible for co-operation with the OSCE Mission, we should like to note the following.

We take the position that in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE and in view of the status of Kosovo and Metohija as an autonomous territory within Serbia, representatives of Priština may be present in the room only as part of the Serbian delegation.

In conclusion, we should like to join in thanking Ambassador Schlumberger, who is concluding his work as Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, and wish him every success in whatever he does next. We look forward to the same close co-operation with the new head of the field presence Ambassador Jan Braathu, who will assume office on 1 October and is very familiar with the key problems of the territory.

Thank you for your attention.