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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1182nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 April 2018

**In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to
Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank the distinguished Head of Mission, Bruce Berton, for his detailed report on the field presence's activities and the analysis of the situation on the ground.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina does indeed remain complicated. With preparations now under way for the general election in October this year, the internal political crisis is worsening at the general level and throughout the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Breakdowns in inter-ethnic co-operation create problems for the functioning of government bodies, slow down reforms, and encourage the different ethnic communities to step up their efforts to ensure and protect the equal rights and broad autonomy guaranteed by the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dayton Accords). We call on Bosnian political forces to refrain from provocative statements that could undermine stability during the election campaign. We hope that they will succeed, independently, in reaching a compromise solution on electoral legislation reform that would make it possible to avoid the bleak prospect of paralysing the system of government.

As one of the guarantors of the 1995 Dayton Accords and a participant in the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council, the Russian Federation supports Bosnia and Herzegovina's territorial integrity and wishes to see the stable and normal functioning of its institutions in respect for the equal rights of the three peoples forming the State.

We believe that the international protectorate over Bosnia and Herzegovina has long since outlived its need and is increasingly holding back efforts to strengthen sovereignty and develop a culture of compromise in the country. We advocate swift steps to place responsibility for Bosnia and Herzegovina's fate in the hands of the Bosnians themselves, abolish the Office of the High Representative, and, to this end, implement Agenda "5+2", which was approved by the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council in 2008.

It is important that the international presence, including the OSCE Mission, continue to follow a balanced and impartial approach to assessing the actions of the different Bosnian sides. It would be misguided to create the impression that the Republika Srpska leadership is to blame for all of the problems in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It would be equally misguided to attempt to influence the international political processes by imposing sanctions on Bosnian politicians deemed inconvenient. The example of the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia shows that a biased line with regard to Bosnian affairs would only exacerbate the contradictions in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The adoption by the Parliament of the Republika Srpska of a resolution on military neutrality, which contains a provision on a referendum on the issue of NATO membership, does not contradict Bosnia and Herzegovina's fundamental principle of agreeing all issues concerning the country's development between the two entities and the three peoples forming the State. The Republika Srpska has entirely justified grounds for doubting that joining NATO would strengthen regional security. In reality, NATO's increasing military activity is only creating new dividing lines in Europe.

We hope that the OSCE Mission will continue to work within its approved mandate and not fail to take into account the views of the different ethnic communities. The main task is to facilitate peaceful coexistence of the different ethnic groups on the basis of the principle of mutual respect, and consolidate interfaith harmony and tolerance in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Dayton Accords. It is also important to assist the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in overcoming discriminatory practices in the education sector, preventing hate crimes, encouraging interfaith dialogue, and countering transnational threats. Practical support must continue as regards the return home of refugees and displaced persons and efforts to resolve the problems they encounter.

Thank you for your attention.