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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1181st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

12 April 2018

**On the attack by Kosovo police on Serbs in Kosovska Mitrovica on
26 March**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are outraged over the scandalous case on 26 March in Kosovska Mitrovica, when Kosovo special operations police, “armed to the teeth”, attacked a peaceful gathering of Serbs living in the north of Kosovo and Metohija. Acting demonstratively, in full view of numerous video cameras, they assaulted dozens of people. Those interested will have no difficulty finding numerous videos on the Internet. The unarmed participants in the gathering, which included mayors of Serbian towns, were beaten about the head with rifle butts and had their arms twisted behind their backs. The attackers pointed their guns at the gathering’s security guards, who had been showing no resistance. The demonstrative brutality of the Kosovo special operations police suggests that the attack was a planned provocation designed to publicly humiliate and intimidate the region’s Serbian population.

Gross force was used against Marko Đurić, Director of the Serbian Government Office for Kosovo and Metohija, who was arrested, handcuffed and taken to Priština. Once in Priština, Mr. Đurić, who heads the Serbian delegation at talks between Belgrade and Priština as part of the Brussels dialogue, was led several hundred metres through the street to a police station, where he was humiliated and insulted by Kosovo Albanians. He was then expelled from the territory on the false pretext of having failed to comply with procedures for entering Kosovo.

Such action by the police, which is unlikely to have gone ahead without the order from the Kosovo authorities and the approval of their sponsors, is the result of the openly indulgent line taken by the international missions present in the region – the NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 gives these missions the main responsibility for ensuring the safety and security of the non-Albanian population, but they continue to close their eyes to and even to indulge the lawlessness in the region. They could not, or more likely did not wish to respond to the recent attack by the Kosovo police against Serbs, despite their mandate, and have taken no measures to prevent unlawful action by the Kosovars.

This does not surprise us. We have drawn attention on past occasions to the Kosovo authorities' failure to fulfil their obligations to establish the Community of Serb Municipalities and to allow the Special Chambers to investigate the crimes of the Kosovo Liberation Army to start their work. Now, judging by numerous leaks in the media, players from outside the region seek to refocus the international missions' work on new tasks that contradict their mandates. We noted the statement by Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Wess Mitchell that: "The U.S. has closely cooperated related to transformation of the KSF [Kosovo Security Forces] and we will continue supporting this transformation in all levels," bringing the forces up to NATO standards. The resources and capabilities of the US military base Bondsteel will be used in this work. This is backed up by statements by the commander of the KFOR Multinational Battle Group-East, US army Colonel Nick Ducich, who spoke of plans to "assist Kosovo's stable development," rather than ensuring inter-ethnic harmony in the region, as the KFOR mandate demands.

The inaction by international missions in response to the Kosovo authorities' provocations, their blind support for the Kosovo Albanians, and their ignoring of the interests of the Serbian Government and the Kosovo Serbs risk setting off new armed clashes in Kosovo and destabilizing the Western Balkans region in general. So far, only the calm response by the Serbian authorities to the situation has prevented the flames from growing, which, it seems, is what the Kosovo Albanian authorities want to see happen.

We call on all who have an influence on the Kosovo leadership not to forget their responsibility for developments. A clear response is needed to the events that took place. Sending calls for restraint to both sides (Kosovo and Serbia) is equivalent to putting the criminal and the victim on the same footing. All participants in the Kosovo settlement process should strictly implement UN Security Council resolution 1244, and the international missions should act in strict accordance with their mandates to maintain peace and stability in the region.

We thank the OSCE Mission for promptly informing us about the circumstances of what happened on 26 March in Kosovska Mitrovica. We hope that the field presence will give a public assessment of the actions by the Kosovo police, which cast a shadow over the many years of assistance that the OSCE has provided for their development. It is clear, as this latest case shows, that the work of the police in Kosovo is still far from democratic standards to say the least.

Thank you for your attention.