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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1230th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 May 2019

On the violent acts by Kosovo police units in the north of the territory

Mr. Chairperson,

We support our Serbian colleagues completely. The latest provocation by the authorities in Priština, whose special forces units raided municipalities populated by Serbs in the north of Kosovo and Metohija in the morning of 28 May, deserves to be unequivocally condemned. We expect an appropriate reaction to these events from the OSCE Chairmanship and the Organization's relevant structures.

According to the "official" version, the reason for the large-scale armed action was to crack down on corrupt officials throughout all of the territory of Kosovo. This shows astonishing concern for the maintenance of law and order in the territory, does it not? And yet this is a region that has long been a "grey zone" for the transit of drugs that kill young people in Europe. This is where jihadists were massively recruited for the war in the Middle East. And this is where cases of murder for illegal organ transplants have remained uninvestigated for many years, with the persons involved in these atrocities still at large.

Along with dozens of Serbs, a member of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo and citizen of the Russian Federation Mikhail Krasnoshchekov was savagely beaten and arrested during the execution of the illegal order by the Kosovo police in the town of Zubin Potok. The attackers were not even deterred by the fact that the Russian enjoyed diplomatic immunity. What is this, if not a total disregard by the authorities in Priština of international law? Or is concern for the law merely a screen for provocation by the Kosovo Albanian elite? Will the perpetrators of the attack on the UN staff member be duly punished? We shall carefully monitor the case and will not let this criminal matter quickly drop.

In effect, this operation by the Kosovo Albanian special forces is the latest episode in a long-established practice of intimidating and squeezing out the non-Albanian population with a view to gaining control of the north of Kosovo by force. The timing of the raid was no accident. It came right after the statement in the National Assembly on the Kosovo question by the Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić. Evidently, the restrained approach by the Serbian authorities aimed at achieving a just and long-term settlement is of no interest either to the authorities in Priština or their Western protectors. The provocative behaviour by the Kosovans is a direct consequence of the long-standing indulgence by the United States of America and the European Union, which has been an evident failure as a mediator. The Kosovan leaders have become accustomed to getting away with all of their provocations.

It is well known that the authorities in Belgrade and Priština had reached an understanding in their discussions, with the participation of the EU and the support of the West, that the Kosovo special police force, armed with long-barrelled guns, would not enter the Serb-populated north. Nevertheless, over the past few years, this has occurred repeatedly with the full connivance of the international Kosovo Force, which is mandated by the UN Security Council to ensure peace and security in the territory.

We once again urge the supporters of the authorities in Priština to think about the consequences of the anti-Serb actions fomented by Kosovo. This is the quickest way to incite inter-ethnic tension, making a nonsense of the years of effort by the international community to achieve a peaceful settlement. The time has come to bring the Kosovo Albanian radicals to reason and to prevent the further spread of the conflict with its unpredictable consequences.

Kosovo remains the chief source of instability and conflict potential in the region. In the past months, the Kosovans have committed a whole series of acts in violation of UN Security Council resolution 1244 and other international agreements – including the decision on the creation of an “army”, the introduction of customs duty on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and raids by the armed Kosovo Albanian “police” in the north of the territory. The aforementioned assault and infliction of bodily injury on a staff member of the UN enjoying diplomatic immunity bears witness to the climate of general impunity in the territory. This is also confirmed by a disappointing statistic: in the course of 20 years, only 148 persons have returned to Kosovo out of more than 200,000 Serbs forced to leave their own homes. There has been no progress either in the creation of the Community of Serb Municipalities in Kosovo. The time has come to put an end to the “Greater Albania” ambitions and the unlawful activities by the Kosovans.

Unfortunately, in the next Current Issues item, we will once again hear attempts to justify the violence by the Kosovo security forces. As usual the United States is among the first who love to call themselves “friends of Serbia”. The defenders of the authorities in Priština are guided solely by their own interests in the Western Balkans and take no account of human rights and freedoms. At the same time, we nevertheless hope that the “advocates of Kosovo” will use their leverage to bring its leadership to reason.

Thank you for your attention.