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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1299th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

21 January 2021

On the presentation by the OSCE Secretary General, Ms. Helga Schmid

Madam Chairperson,

We are pleased to welcome you as Secretary General to the Permanent Council. We listened with interest to your statement. We fully share the view that the level of real engagement of our Organization in solving fundamental pan-European problems does not match its potential, as laid down in Helsinki in 1975 and confirmed by numerous subsequent decisions of the participating States, including at the highest political level. The dominant confrontational approaches and the lack of focus on a unifying agenda hinder the realization of the goal set at the 2010 OSCE Summit in Astana of creating a common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community.

Nevertheless, we are convinced that, given its wide geographical coverage and abundant international instruments, the OSCE remains a unique platform for dialogue and for bringing the 57 participating States together in the face of common security challenges that cannot be dealt with effectively alone or in group alliances. Your role, Madam Secretary General, is of great importance in helping States to address these issues.

One key factor is to take into account the full range of national positions. We urge you to be strictly guided by Permanent Council Decision No. 485 of 2002 on OSCE statements and public information. This also applies to all public relations activities, including the work of the official OSCE website. Transparency is equally important. During the weekly reports of the Secretary General to the Permanent Council, we expect as much detail as possible about the Secretariat's activities.

We expect the Secretariat to continue to focus on developing a strategic vision and assessing trends in European security. There is a need for initiatives that stimulate creative inter-State dialogue on ways of reducing tensions and restoring trust in the Euro-Atlantic area. The previous Secretary General's "Security Days" were a good experience. The concept of comprehensive, co-operative, equal and indivisible security remains the foundation. No narrow opportunistic notions like a "rules-based order" or a "European security order" can replace the basis of our Organization agreed at the highest level.

The massive challenges faced by the OSCE last year, including the coronavirus pandemic, underlined the long-overdue need to improve the Organization's effectiveness. As you know, Russia proposed that practical work be resumed in this area. We hope that it will still be possible to renew such efforts in the near future, under the aegis of the Chairmanship and with the active support of the Secretariat and you personally, Ms. Schmid.

We agree that the OSCE budget should be adopted as soon as possible. We are grateful to the Swedish Chairmanship for preparing the second revised proposal for 2021. These efforts go in the right direction for the most part. Nevertheless, a number of participating States still have comments that need to be discussed further. We are willing to continue to engage in the budget discussions in a constructive and pragmatic manner.

There is a considerable need for a professional contribution by the OSCE Secretariat to the promotion of regional conflict resolution. The Organization has developed a wide range of crisis management tools. The main challenge is their effective use.

The OSCE's efforts as regards the settlement of the internal Ukrainian conflict should be aimed at facilitating the full implementation by the Government in Kyiv and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk of the Minsk Package of Measures through direct dialogue by their representatives in the Trilateral Contact Group. The Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) should pay equal attention to the situation on both sides of the line of contact in Donbas, as well as the situation in the rest of the country, including respect for the linguistic, educational, cultural and religious rights of the non-Ukrainian-speaking population, freedom of expression and the rule of law. The SMM needs to prepare a thematic report on the pressing issue of manifestations of aggressive nationalism, neo-Nazism and xenophobia in Ukraine.

We look forward to the Secretariat's contribution to OSCE mediation efforts in other conflict management situations as well. Work on Nagorno-Karabakh should be structured primarily around the implementation of the tripartite statements by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia of 9 November 2020 and 11 January 2021. In Transdniestria, the regular work in the "5+2" negotiation format needs to be kept up and the Sides assisted in implementing the agreements reached earlier. It remains important to help the Trans-Caucasian States – Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia – to find the ideal parameters for addressing regional security issues within the framework of the Geneva International Discussions. Chief among them is their agreement on a joint statement on the non-use of force in the Trans-Caucasus.

Host countries are becoming increasingly demanding with respect to the work of the OSCE's field operations. In some cases, governments are interested in receiving targeted assistance only in certain areas. It is important to listen carefully to their needs regarding the work priorities of the operations and to ensure a high standard in terms of their transparency and accountability, regardless of where the funding comes from. We recall that, in accordance with paragraph 41 of the Charter for European Security, our Organization should assist [the host country] "in building its own capacity and expertise ... [and] facilitate an efficient transfer of the tasks of the operation to the host country". At the same time, we draw attention to the inadmissibility of the non-core use of the Organization's resources in the host States. We trust that the Mission in Kosovo will strictly abide by United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 and pay increased attention to the protection of the non-Albanian population of the territory.

Full transparency is required regarding the OSCE's interaction with other international and regional organizations, which should be based on the Platform for Co-operative Security. An important step in this direction – in line with the decision of the Istanbul Summit (1999) – would be the resumption of the practice of the Secretary General's annual reports to the Permanent Council on this matter. We call for the

development of the full potential for co-operation with regional organizations in the east of the OSCE area, such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and for intensifying communication with their Secretariats. We propose that consideration be given to holding meetings of the heads of the main structures responsible for security in the Euro-Atlantic area along the lines of the meetings organized in Corfu in 2009 and Almaty in 2010.

In conclusion, I should like to express my confidence that your wealth of experience, Madam Secretary General, will enable you to effectively co-ordinate the work of all OSCE executive structures, facilitate dialogue and promote a unifying agenda. Russia stands ready to assist you to the best of its ability. We wish you every success in this responsible position.

Thank you for your attention.