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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1279th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 September 2020

On co-operation with OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation

Mr. Chairperson,

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the official inauguration of OSCE co-operation with the Asian Partners for Co-operation. As you know, in accordance with OSCE Permanent Council Decision No. 94 of 5 December 1995, Japan and the Republic of Korea were the first to obtain the status of Partners for Co-operation. Subsequently, they were joined by the Kingdom of Thailand, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Australia.

Today we are pleased to welcome to this meeting the distinguished representatives of the partner countries, who are unfortunately infrequent visitors to the Permanent Council. Russia attaches great importance to engaging with the Asian Partners on the full range of issues that constitute the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security.

Regular consultation within the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group is a key mechanism for maintaining contact and "synchronizing watches". In recognition of the importance of such joint work, the OSCE Ministerial Council in Bratislava adopted a decision on 6 December 2019 to rename the Group, also with a view to enhancing the status of our co-operation.

We believe that the agenda of the Group's meetings should include the most pressing international issues of interest both to participating States and to partner countries. Of course, the issues under consideration should be consistent with the mandate of the Organization.

In our view, more attention should be paid to the problems of confidence-building and reducing conflict potential in the region, and to strengthening the economic connectivity of States and integration associations in the Eurasian area.

The OSCE has traditionally devoted increased attention to engagement with Afghanistan. We hope for the speedy launch of an inter-Afghan peace dialogue in the interests both of the people of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan itself and of neighbouring States with a view to ensuring stability and security in the region as a whole.

The annual OSCE Asian Conference is an important form of co-operation. We thank our Japanese colleagues for their hospitality and good organization of this event in Tokyo in 2019 and are grateful to the Government of the Republic of Korea for its willingness to host the Conference this year in Seoul. We regret that the spread of the coronavirus infection makes it impossible to meet face-to-face. We trust that the Permanent Council will approve a set of decisions on the date, venue and agenda of the Conference in the near future. We are willing to assist constructively in agreeing on the relevant draft decisions.

The Partnership Fund, established in 2007 to foster deeper relationships, plays an essential role in maintaining practical co-operation between the OSCE and the Partners for Co-operation. The operating rules of the Fund, as set out in Permanent Council Decision No. 812, provide for the possibility of using the funds exclusively in the OSCE region, with any extrabudgetary activity outside the territory of the participating States (outreach) being subject to approval by the OSCE decision-making bodies. We believe it is important to maintain this procedure, which ensures control over the use of extrabudgetary funds while clearly establishing a list of projects and countries in which they will be used.

We have doubts about the proposal to amend the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE regarding the order of speakers at the Ministerial Council so that the heads of the partner country delegations have the same status as the participating States. We cannot agree with the idea of changing the established order to the detriment of the participating States. Moreover, we do not consider it expedient to interfere with the Rules of Procedure approved by the Ministerial Council in 2006. With the question of the OSCE's legal personality unresolved, this could create a chain reaction and complicate the already difficult negotiations on the subject, all the more so in view of the current institutional crisis in the Organization.

In general, we advocate strengthening the OSCE's co-operation with the Asian Partners for Co-operation and more active participation by their representatives in the day-to-day work of the Organization, for which there is a suitable regulatory framework.

Thank you for your attention.