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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1304th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

4 March 2021

In response to the report by the Acting Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro

Madam Chairperson,

We are grateful to Ms. Siv-Katrine Leirtroe for her detailed report on the situation in Montenegro and the main areas of work of the OSCE Mission to that country.

The work being carried out by this field operation in a number of domains even during the COVID-19 pandemic is relevant and useful in our view. These domains include assisting the Montenegrin authorities to strengthen the electoral system, parliamentarism and freedom of the media, and also supporting youth co-ordination mechanisms at national and local levels.

We note the Mission's efforts to render assistance with security matters that are also of regional relevance. This refers to the fight against organized crime, extremism, terrorism and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

It is significant that the central theme of last year's election campaign in Montenegro was the adoption of the Act on Freedom of Religion or Beliefs and the Legal Status of Religious Communities. This shows how much store the people set by preserving their age-old foundations. We hope that the amendments approved by the Skupština (Montenegrin Parliament) to the Act have put an end to encroachments on historical realities and to the sowing of artificial discord among believers.

We trust that the Mission will organize its programme in strict compliance with its mandate, without allowing itself to be sidetracked by topics that are beyond the scope of OSCE commitments, notably with regard to a one-sided view of the need for Montenegro to be drawn into extraneous integration structures.

In closing, we should like to wish the Mission's team success in its work and robust health in the current challenging conditions.

Thank you for your attention.