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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1179th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 March 2018

In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank the Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia Ambassador Andrea Orizio for this substantive report on the field operation's work.

The Mission's observations confirm that Russia's friend the Republic of Serbia is developing actively and has achieved impressive economic results, particularly for a State that in the not so distant past was subjected to large-scale aggression by NATO, which caused tremendous damage to the country's industrial and transport infrastructure.

The Serbian Government pursues a balanced foreign and domestic policy focused on raising people's quality of life. This course has the public's support, as is shown by the results of the 2017 presidential election and the municipal election in Belgrade on 4 March this year. Isolated criticism from the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in no way diminishes the high standard of organization of these elections, taking into account the well-known problems with the ODIHR's election monitoring methodology.

Serbia is distinguished by its responsible approach to developing regional ties with neighbouring States and has proven through concrete steps its desire to overcome historical differences. We think it important that the Mission to Serbia and other OSCE field operations in the Balkans support the Serbian Government in this area. Serbia's proactive line on resolving the Kosovo problem deserves high praise. We hope that this will make it possible to settle the conflict on the basis of the principles set out by United Nations Security Council resolution 1244.

The Serbian Government has set a course of continued domestic reform, making national institutions more effective, and enhancing legislation in a range of areas. We hope that the OSCE Mission will continue to support the host authorities at their request and within the limits set by the Serbian Government in line with its OSCE commitments.

We value the Mission's contribution to developing the Serbian law enforcement system's capacity to combat organized crime, laundering of the proceeds of crime and the financing of criminal activity, corruption, trafficking in human beings, and developing a system of national forensic expertise. For our part, we are studying options for Russian participation in carrying out the Mission's thematic projects.

We see the Serbian Government's interest in assistance with carrying out judicial reform, improving media regulation and the public notary system, and strengthening local self-government. We are aware of the support the Mission is providing in protecting the rights of national minorities, including in the south and south-west of the country. It is important to achieve greater results in resolving the issue of resettling refugees and internally displaced persons.

Overall, we think the work of the OSCE Mission to Serbia very useful. We wish distinguished Ambassador Orizio and the Mission's team every success.

Thank you for your attention.