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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1461st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 February 2024

On the early presidential election in Azerbaijan

Madam Chairperson,

We welcome the successful holding of the early presidential election in Azerbaijan on 7 February of this year.

During a telephone conversation, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, warmly congratulated Ilham Aliyev on his landslide victory. He also sent him a congratulatory telegram, in which it is noted that the voting results fully confirmed the nationwide support for the course steered by the President of Azerbaijan, which is aimed at expediting the country's socio-economic development and strengthening its positioning on the world stage.

The election attracted considerable attention abroad: it was monitored by 790 international observers, including observers from Russia. Our country deployed 148 representatives, some of them under the auspices of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, the Executive Committee and Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

The Secretary General of the CIS, Sergey Lebedev, confirmed that the election was in line with the principles for expression of the democratic will, and that voter turnout was high. According to the Chair of the Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Grigory Karasin, the voting took place on a competitive basis – with alternative candidates to choose from – and in a favourable atmosphere. The Secretary-General of the SCO, Zhang Ming, pointed to the openness and transparency of the election.

Against this backdrop the assessments by Western alliance countries and the international bodies under their control have stood out for their exceptional bias. Their attitude was marked by an extreme lack of objectivity from the very outset – they were executing game plans drawn up in advance for discrediting the electoral process. These approaches are clearly confirmed by the attempts of the joint mission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, which also took part in the monitoring, to dredge up their non-existent “gold standards”. We are

not, though, surprised at this, since conclusions of this kind traditionally feature in the ODIHR's findings with regard to countries "east of Vienna". This is a further reminder of the need to develop common criteria for assessing electoral processes in the OSCE area. Of course, if there is anyone else who feels that is necessary. For now, the opposite is suggested by the diplomatic "savoir faire" shown by certain participating States as they exclude whole countries from the note verbale containing the invitation to observe elections on their territory.

Madam Chairperson,

We take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to further strengthening our alliance and strategic partnership with the Republic of Azerbaijan, and likewise our commitment to actively working together on international and regional issues, including implementation of the entire set of trilateral agreements on the normalization of Azerbaijani-Armenian relations reached by Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia at the highest level.

Thank you for your attention.