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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1117th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 November 2016

**In response to the address by the
Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions on Security and
Stability in the Trans-Caucasus**

Mr. Chairperson,

We join in welcoming the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions on Security and Stability in the Trans-Caucasus from the United Nations, the OSCE and the European Union, Ambassadors Antti Turunen, Günther Bächler and Herbert Salber. The relevance of the Geneva Discussions format is unquestionable. It is the only platform today for direct dialogue on the problems of ensuring lasting security in the region with the participation on an equal basis of representatives of Abkhazia, Georgia, South Ossetia, Russia, the United States of America, and the United Nations, the OSCE and the European Union. Unfortunately, the work of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian delegations in other multilateral forums continues to come up against obstacles.

We are pleased to note the initiative by the Co-Chairs in working towards agreement on a joint statement by the participants in the Geneva process on the non-use of force as an interim step on the way towards legally binding peace agreements between Georgia and Abkhazia and South Ossetia, respectively. Completing work on the document is still problematic in view of the unwillingness of the Georgian representatives to compromise. We trust that the Co-Chairs will continue to seek a solution.

Once again we note the important role of the Geneva platform in the joint review of the current security situation at Georgia's borders with the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia. The participants in the discussions are agreed that the border situation is stable and under control. The checkpoints are working effectively and the inter-State border regime is being observed on the whole. There have been a few incidents on account of the lack of information on the part of the local population about exactly where the boundary line runs. This problem could be solved by marking the border properly. The deliberate violations of the border regime by Georgia are a matter of common knowledge. The representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have promptly drawn the attention of the

Co-Chairs to such provocation. It has been possible so far to avoid any negative consequences.

The Joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) in Gal and Ergneti and the effective work of the hotlines continue to play an important role as instruments for strengthening security and restoring trust at the Georgian-South Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhazian borders. In the last year the work of the IPRMs has reached a new level. Regular meetings have been taking place, and the effectiveness with which problems are solved has improved. We note the efforts by the Co-Chairs of the Geneva Discussions to resume the work of the IPRM in Gal. The Mechanism, including the last meeting on 19 October, has already confirmed its usefulness. We trust that this work will be continued as part of the direct dialogue between the parties.

We welcome the mediating efforts of the Co-Chairs of the Geneva Discussions in helping to resolve humanitarian problems, a sensitive issue for Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Georgia. The experience of co-operation in environmental and water management and with respect to the cultural heritage has shown that this work can be highly effective if there is genuine interest in it by the parties. Conversely, attempts by Georgia to politicize the issue of refugees on international platforms, particularly the United Nations, in the absence of representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia undermines the efforts of the mediators and merely delays the resolution of these important issues.

In conclusion, we should like once again to express to the distinguished Co-Chairs of the Geneva Discussions our fundamental support of their important work and the hope for a continuation of the discussions in a constructive vein.

Thank you for your attention.