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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1144th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 May 2017

In connection with the escalation of the situation in Macedonia

Mr. Chairperson,

We are concerned about the development of the situation in the Republic of Macedonia. At the expense of resolving internal political differences through dialogue, on 27 April, the opposition, which lost the parliamentary elections, took steps to elect the Speaker of the Assembly. In the opinion of the overwhelming majority of Macedonians, that decision was a gross violation of established procedures. It is entirely expected that such a step was perceived by the Macedonian public as evidence of behind-the-scenes political agreements between the opposition forces aimed at undermining the constitutional foundations of the country.

In this context, it should not be surprising that this deliberately provocative decision, actively supported by external actors, triggered a large-scale reaction from Macedonian society. Unfortunately, there were a number of casualties as a result of the spontaneous protests. The further development of events in this scenario and attempts to change the country on the basis of the so-called "Tirana platform" threaten an even greater increase in tension and are fraught with a slipping of the situation towards inter-ethnic conflict.

In the current situation, a proper solution can be found only through an inclusive and mutually respectful intra-Macedonian dialogue within a constitutional and legal framework. It is necessary to stop foreign interference in Macedonia's internal affairs and eliminate external pressure to remove the legitimate government and manipulate the will of the Macedonian voters. Only the political forces of the Republic of Macedonia can determine the fate of this country.

Thank you for your attention.