

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1001st MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

22 May 2014

Regarding the flooding in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia

Mr. Chairperson,

We express our heartfelt sympathy to the government and peoples of our brother nation Serbia as well as to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in connection with the numerous victims and the devastation caused by the worst floods in the last hundred years. We grieve with those who have lost family and friends and those who are now homeless, and wish the injured persons a speedy recovery.

We could not fail to respond to the tragedy that has befallen our friends. As instructed by the Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Russian Ministry for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Disaster Relief sent two aircraft with rescuers, two Ka-32 emergency helicopters, 100 tonnes of humanitarian aid, including pumping units, mobile generators and boats as well as food and other basic necessities to flood-affected Serbia. The Russian rescuers were among the first foreign experts to arrive in the disaster area and immediately joined in rescue operations, co-operating closely with the Serbian armed forces, police and emergency services. More than 3,000 persons were evacuated and assisted during this period.

Experts from the Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Centre in Niš, which was established specifically to deal with natural and man-made disasters, are providing significant assistance to the rescuers.

Mr. Chairperson,

The flooding in the Balkans has once again highlighted the need for co-ordinated international civilian emergency response efforts in the event of natural and man-made disasters.

Unfortunately, the flooding is a tragic reminder of the importance of the Swiss Chairmanship's proposals for discussing as one of its priorities the possibility of including the OSCE in the development of measures to improve the preparedness of participating States to manage natural disasters and reduce the damage they cause. There is clearly a need for efforts by the Balkan countries to create a regional emergency mechanism for responding to

natural and man-made disasters. We trust that in solving this task those countries will draw on the expertise and resources of the recently established Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Centre in Niš.

Thank you for your attention.