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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1165th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 November 2017

In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank Ambassador Bernd Borchardt for his informative report on the activities of the OSCE Presence in Albania.

We attach great significance to the harmonious development of the Western Balkans in general and each State in the region in particular. In that context, we consider it necessary to continue the multifaceted assistance to the Albanian authorities by the OSCE Presence in addressing urgent problems of national and regional importance. We trust that this help will be provided in accordance with the tasks determined by the mandate and in close co-ordination with the host authorities.

We believe it necessary to continue the Presence's efforts to increase the effectiveness of the national law enforcement agencies and the judicial system. Organized crime, the drug threat and corruption continue to seriously undermine Albania's development potential. We agree with the focus on pooling efforts at the regional level to counter these phenomena. We support the OSCE Presence's work to enhance the professionalism of national forensics experts and improve judicial proceedings and the prison system, including wider use of punishments that do not involve deprivation of liberty. This work should contribute to a considerable reduction in crime in the country.

Continued assistance in the development of parliamentarianism and the reform of the electoral system appears entirely justified. We trust that the OSCE Presence's long-standing activities in this field will make it possible to avoid a recurrence of political crises in the future. We are aware of the Presence's active work in the area of media freedom, the development of civil society and public control, and the protection of the rights of national minorities.

We hope that the efforts of the professional team headed by Ambassador Borchardt will lead to the creation of the necessary conditions in Albania in the foreseeable future for the country's continued independent development without external monitoring and

assistance. At the same time, we cannot support the use of the OSCE as an instrument for implementing a European integrationist agenda. This Organization was created for a different purpose.

Thank you for your attention.