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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1488th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 September 2024

**On the presentation of the priorities of the 2025 Finnish OSCE Chairmanship by the
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Ms. Elina Valtonen**

Minister,

We thank you for setting out the priorities of the forthcoming Finnish OSCE Chairmanship. That being said, the arguments you have made, Minister, are disappointing. When Finland's bid to assume the Chairmanship was approved a few years ago, there was much hope in the air about your country, which stood at the cradle of the CSCE/OSCE, being able to once again act as a "bridge" between East and West in order to resolve differences in our common European home. The situation at the OSCE is critical: there is virtually nothing left of security or of co-operation. Here I cannot but paraphrase what the eminent President of Finland, Urho Kekkonen, said at the CSCE Summit in Helsinki in 1975: "Security and co-operation are not about putting up fences but opening doors." Will modern-day Finland be able to work towards rectifying the situation? What we have just heard here causes one to doubt that very much.

We note the unacceptable attempts by the future Finnish Chairmanship to ram through confrontational approaches with regard to Ukraine, to substitute the opinion of a group of States for the vital interests of the entire Organization. In the absence of any consensus position whatsoever at the OSCE on the conflict in and around Ukraine, we are currently hearing utterly groundless judgemental political clichés about an alleged "ongoing aggression against Ukraine" and phrases about the need to "put aid for Ukraine at the focus of the OSCE's work in all areas". Our Organization's decision-making bodies have not set the future Chairmanship and the whole OSCE any such task. This is a case of wilfulness, pure and simple.

The Finnish representatives should, in theory, be quite familiar with the rules of our Organization, which were developed over several decades through the efforts of many a generation of diplomats. The paramount priority is to maintain dialogue and co-operation in the interests of equal and indivisible security for all the participating States without exception and to build consensus when adopting any decisions. This axiom has been collectively approved at the highest level. No Chairmanship is entitled to change the parameters for the functioning of the Organization to suit its national ambitions or the wishes of certain groups of countries.

We would remind you that three key documents govern the Chairmanship's work: firstly, the Ministerial Council decision adopted in Porto in 2002 regarding the mandate of the Chairmanship-in-Office (the Chairmanship must ensure "that its actions are not inconsistent with positions agreed by all the participating States"); secondly, the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE (these clearly stipulate the procedure for organizing the work of its decision-making bodies, including mandatory consultations with the participating States on the agenda for meetings); and, thirdly, Permanent Council Decision No. 485 from 2002 regarding public statements on behalf of the Organization, in which it is laid down that "the Chairman-in-Office or his representative is expected to take into account the entire spectrum of expressed opinions." By the way, in that very same document it is stated that "formal OSCE positions are expressed in decisions, statements and documents adopted by the decision-making bodies on the basis of consensus." The concept of a "majority opinion" is inadmissible at the OSCE. Furthermore, Minister, no violations of the stipulations contained in these three documents – violations unfortunately permitted by the previous Chairmanships – justify their being used as some kind of "precedent". We regard such goings-on as a disgraceful manifestation of diplomatic unprofessionalism.

Let me say a few words about the crisis in and around Ukraine, which we have already mentioned. We categorically reject any attempts to portray it as some sort of "aggression by Russia". It is part of the hybrid war unleashed by the United States of America and its satellites to preserve their hegemony worldwide, one in which the inhabitants of Ukraine are being used as "expendable material" for the purposes of undermining Russia's statehood and its international postures. For that reason, it will not do to mix up concepts, to manipulatively equate the Kyiv regime with Ukraine as a whole.

We would also add that there is clearly a feigned "blindness" towards the real problems besetting Ukrainian society, namely the arbitrariness of the authorities, off-the-charts corruption in all spheres, the curtailment of people's rights, the constant tightening of discriminatory legislation as part of attempts to erase the national and cultural identity of Ukraine's Russian and Russian-speaking inhabitants, the encroachments on religious rights in violation of international legal norms and OSCE commitments.

The confrontational course and rhetoric that the future Finnish Chairmanship has deliberately opted for with regard to Ukraine are liable to deadlock the situation at the OSCE for good and to "lift" the current atmosphere of confrontation into even more dangerous heights. This has nothing in common with diplomacy or exhortation to dialogue, which always remained a fundamental instrument of the Helsinki process.

Above and beyond the Ukraine issue, the OSCE is a multifunctional structure both geographically and in terms of its broad thematic scope. No single regional situation, no matter how highly publicized it may be, can completely overshadow all other activities. In particular, it is unacceptable to forget about other conflict zones, where the OSCE is called upon to put its mediation capacity to use. The Geneva Discussions on Security in the Trans-Caucasus must not be neglected, nor must the Transdniestrian and Kosovo settlement processes, among other issues.

We note the future Chairmanship's interest in work in Central Asia, including through the OSCE field operations in that region. It is important to avoid politicization and bias in this work. The focus must be on strict compliance by the field operations with their respective mandates and on organizing their work in line with the host States' priorities and needs. It is unacceptable to apply the Organization's toolbox to the Central Asian region so as to advance the interests of certain groups of countries or alliances.

Russia is cognizant of the difficulties that OSCE field operations are generally encountering given the lack of a Unified Budget. This problem must and absolutely can be resolved without detriment to the very essence of the OSCE's fieldwork, specifically by adopting the Organization's principal financial document, rather than various sorts of extrabudgetary funds that undermine the transparency and

accountability of its field operations. To put it bluntly, in such a destructive scenario the added value brought by the field operations cannot but be called into question.

Minister,

It is particularly incumbent on the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office to co-ordinate the work in the three dimensions of security, including the activities of the specialized Committees of the Permanent Council. It must be said that this is now the third year in a row that these bodies have been subjected to excessive politicization based on the anti-Russian attitudes of a number of countries. We urge the Finnish Chairmanship team to give very serious consideration, together with the heads of the three Committees, to the drawing-up of a balanced programme of work for them in 2025, taking into account the needs of all participating States without exception.

We are convinced of the need to restore the OSCE's once prominent role – now sadly considerably diminished – in countering a range of transnational threats. One of the key areas of work in that regard must be combating the international terrorist threat in all its manifestations. We call upon the Chairmanship to give due weight to the fight against drug trafficking. We are prepared to continue seeking common ground on the security of information and communication technologies.

We believe it is important that high-level conferences on counter-terrorism, combating drugs and cybersecurity be held next year, along with expert meetings on border security and police co-operation. We note the need to organize the Annual Security Review Conference in line with the format approved through an OSCE Ministerial Council decision adopted in Porto in 2002 and to initiate relevant consultations in good time.

Vigorous efforts are required to strengthen the elements of constructive work under the second “basket” that the Maltese Chairmanship managed to put in place. We expect Finland to take active steps to launch as soon as possible a fully fledged consultation process to agree on the theme, agenda and organizational modalities of the annual OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum involving all participating States without exception and with due regard for their legitimate interests.

We do not object, on the whole, to the Finnish Chairmanship's intention to continue the discussion on climate change under the economic and environmental dimension.

At the same time, bearing in mind the considerable economic challenges that a number of participating States, including Finland, are experiencing in connection with the unilateral economic restrictions that have spread far and wide in the OSCE area, we believe it would be fitting to discuss that issue as part of the second “basket”.

Joint work in the human dimension by all the participating States is, in effect, paralysed. Instead, initiatives by a small group of countries that do not reflect the interests of all the participating States are being promoted under the Organization's banner. A case in point is the holding of ersatz events in lieu of consensus-based conferences, and in dubious locations to boot. Poland has tainted itself up to the hilt through its discriminatory attitude towards participants from Russia and its militant Russophobia. In that regard, we will continue to insist on the need to relocate all of the human dimension events and the headquarters of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) outside Poland. We also reiterate the importance of taking a responsible and serious approach to drawing up the agenda for the third “basket”, including agreeing on a “package” of human dimension events for 2025. We would emphasize that the corresponding work must be organized on the basis of taking into account the legitimate and well-founded interests of all 57 participating States without exception.

In terms of thematic content, there continues to be a need for discussing the problems of neo-Nazism, racism and racial discrimination, religious intolerance and violations of the rights of national minorities and ethnic groups, including the complete oppression of Russian and Russian-speaking populations. Other pressing issues include the protection of spiritual and moral values, and respect for the right to freedom of movement and people-to-people contacts. It is important to continue focusing on the fight against trafficking in human beings as well, including trafficking for the removal of human organs, tissues and cells and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. And likewise on the growing curtailment of the rights of migrants and refugees, including children and women.

With regard to freedom of the media and pluralism of opinions, particular attention needs to be paid to the inadmissibility of censoring the media landscape, grading sources of information and segregating journalists into those who are “right” and those who are “wrong”. The realization of the fundamental right to freedom of expression is tied closely to the safety of journalists. It is categorically unacceptable to persecute, discredit, place prohibitions on, and encourage the physical elimination of, journalists simply on account of their attempts to communicate information beyond the mainstream.

In view of the egregious bias and inconsistencies marring the so-called gold standard of the ODIHR’s election observation methodology, the joint development of uniform rules for monitoring elections in the OSCE’s area of responsibility continues to be an extremely relevant task.

In closing, I shall return to the main point. The basis of our Organization is consensus. This is what sets it apart from formats operating on a majority basis or through regimentation, such as the European Union and NATO. At the OSCE it is necessary to work conscientiously on aligning positions, on taking account of the interests of all participating States and on looking for a common denominator. It is this – and not the relaying of strident appeals – that is required from the Chairmanship-in-Office, which is meant to speak and act on behalf of all the participating States. This should be constantly kept in mind. The OSCE is facing an existential threat – we nevertheless hope that the Finnish representatives will work for the good of the Organization, rather than pushing it towards the point of no return.

Thank you for your attention.