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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1425th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 June 2023

On the OSCE Chairmanship for 2024

Mr. Chairperson,

We fully share the Republic of Belarus's concern over the situation with regard to approving the country that will assume the functions of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office in 2024. Our Organization is approaching the middle of the current year without any certitude on this matter, which is of key importance for its ability to continue functioning normally. We would remind you that all the procedural aspects – the selection of candidacies for a future Chairmanship, the holding of discussions among the participating States and the preparation of corresponding decisions of the OSCE decision-making bodies – fall entirely under the purview of the Chairmanship-in-Office.

We wish to make it clear that a state of affairs where no official consultations on this matter are being held within the Organization is unacceptable. Instead, misinformation is being planted to suggest that the OSCE somehow faces imminent collapse unless Estonia is approved for 2024. In particular, we are puzzled by media reports of the words to that effect by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland. Frankly, the OSCE's work is being undermined by something else altogether, namely by attacks on the consensus rule, by hollowing out the Organization's agenda in favour of issues that benefit merely one group of countries, by refusing to hold key events in line with the decisions of decision-making bodies and the Rules of Procedure, by devaluing the consultative process involving all the participating States.

Even more questions are raised by the remarks made on 29 May by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia. Accusing Russia of obstructing the OSCE's work, he pointed out that his country was "an excellent candidate for the Chairmanship" and would not submit to pressure from the authorities in Moscow to find a candidate that suited them. This Estonian minister evidently has no idea of how the Organization works, or maybe he got the OSCE mixed up with other entities. Any country's bid for the position of Chairmanship-in-Office can be approved only with the consent of all 57 participating States. The OSCE is premised on that. If in Tallinn they already failed to realize in 2021 that their country's candidacy had no chance whatsoever of attracting consensus, that is not a problem of the Organization as such but, rather, a problem with the Estonian political culture. And no amount of propagandistic blackmail can remedy the fundamental inability of Estonia to steer the OSCE in a responsible manner.

Our Organization should be piloted by those capable of ensuring its survival and governability, by those who do not sacrifice its work for the sake of advancing their opportunistic, narrow-minded national interests. We call upon the OSCE Chairmanship of North Macedonia to initiate the process of full-scale consultations on genuine candidates without delay so that the relevant Ministerial Council decision can be agreed on promptly, thereby giving the incoming Chairmanship the opportunity to prepare properly for next year.

Thank you for your attention.