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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1212th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 January 2019

On the development of the situation in Macedonia

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to draw attention to the vote in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia on 11 January to rename the country in accordance with the so-called Prespa Agreement. We are surprised that this subject has been overlooked by the OSCE Permanent Council, although it directly affects the security of our continent.

We cannot share the euphoria regarding the decisions taken. We stand in solidarity with the Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov regarding their dubious legitimacy and apparent lack of conformity with the will of the Macedonian citizens, who paid no heed to the referendum on changing the name of their country.

The methods for cobbling together the constitutional majority necessary for the amendments to be adopted are well known. They include the law on amnesty, which has been presented as an act of “national reconciliation”. In actual fact it is an instrument for selective justice, which gives the current authorities an opportunity to “punish or pardon” dissenting deputies depending on their positions on the agreement. Double standards on the part of the Western countries that in 2016 criticized President Ivanov’s decision to pardon 56 politicians are clearly evident here. Then the United States of America and the European Union confirmed in unison that the head of State was undermining the foundations of democracy and the principles of the rule of law.

Numerous procedural violations of the established legislative process have undermined public confidence in the institutions of power, democratic procedures and the parliamentary process. A recent example is the publication in the official gazette of 14 January of the instrument of ratification for the Prespa Agreement contrary to the constitutional prerogatives accorded to the President and without his signature.

At the same time, the odious law on language use, which actually introduces bilingualism in the country, granting Albanian the status of the second official language, was also published without being signed by the President. This is exactly what was promised to

the leaders of the Albanian parties that came to power under the conditions of the notorious 2017 Tirana Platform. Essentially, this is undermining the inter-ethnic model of the State established by the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

The Macedonian State has suffered serious damage, the consequences of which for its long-term development are currently difficult to predict. The protests that have continued practically without interruption over the last few days in Skopje and other Macedonian cities are illustrative of the deep divide in society and its polarization.

We are disappointed at the enthusiastically approving response by Western countries and representatives of the European Union to the Macedonian Parliament's decision. This is the latest manifestation of the now established policy of double standards in the implementation of such decisions and once again highlighted the opportunistic and contrived nature of the slogans about the protection of democratic values and the rule of law. The example of Macedonia has once again demonstrated that democracy and the law are nothing more than a "bargaining chip" in the pursuit of geopolitical goals – in this case, in order to continue the artificial process of changing Macedonia's name, imposed from the outside, with the aim of forcing another Western Balkan country into NATO.

We doubt that the tactic selected for resolving issues of national importance for the future of Macedonia and affecting its fundamental foundations can serve the long-term settlement of the problem of the country's name. We firmly believe that a definitive and sustainable solution can be found by Macedonia and Greece without external pressure, within the framework of the law and with broad public support.

As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Russia is closely monitoring the situation. We take the position that in accordance with paragraph 3 of UN Security Council resolution 845 the results of the negotiations between the authorities in Skopje and Athens will be examined in the UN Security Council.

Thank you for your attention.