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**STATEMENT BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1472nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

9 May 2024

In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo

Madam Chairperson,

We thank Ambassador Michael Davenport for his latest highly detailed report on the state of affairs in the Serbian Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija and the work performed by the Mission during the period under review.

The situation in Kosovo and Metohija continues to deteriorate, which is deeply troubling. The participation by the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, in a United Nations Security Council meeting on 22 April devoted to the question of Kosovo underlines the gravity of the situation. The “authorities” in Pristina are doubling down on their destructive policy of driving out national minorities living in the province. As reflected in the Mission’s report, the number of forcibly displaced persons returning to Kosovo is continually decreasing. Thus, in 2022 there were 204 such returnees, in 2023 there were 117 and in the first quarter of this year just 25. At the same time, the Serbs continue to be the most vulnerable minority in the province from the point of view of safeguarding their security. In that regard, we note the attention paid by the Mission to this matter in its report. We urge that a rigorous tab be kept on this problem going forward too.

The anti-Serb policy of the provisional institutions of self-government in Pristina is multidimensional. In 2022, the province’s “authorities” simply banned the organization of a referendum in Kosovo and Metohija on adopting amendments to the Serbian Constitution, and also the casting of votes there for the combined parliamentary and presidential elections in Serbia. In December 2023, the Kosovo Serbs were denied the opportunity to participate in the electoral proceedings for the early parliamentary election according to their place of residence. The established practice of holding elections in the province with the OSCE Mission’s assistance has thus been ditched by the Kosovo “leadership”.

An embargo on the import of goods from central Serbia, including food and medicines, has been in place in the province ever since June 2023. As from the autumn of that year, the Kosovo “police” have ramped up the number of detentions and arrests of non-Albanians. A blatantly discriminatory step by the “government” of Albin Kurti was the ban, effective as of 1 February this year, on the circulation of the Serbian dinar and any financial transactions in that currency. This decision was accompanied by the closing

of banks, the blocking of deliveries of dinars in cash and raids on post offices by the “police”. Yet, in Kosovo and Metohija around 100,000 citizens receive their salaries and social security benefits in dinars – they are in effect being deprived of their means of subsistence. A big question mark still hangs over whether public institutions, including kindergartens, schools and hospitals, can function properly.

Systematic attacks on Serbian Orthodox Church sites continue; there is an ongoing usurpation and Albanization of the Serbian cultural and spiritual heritage. Certain episodes of this kind are mentioned in the report that was presented today.

As for a key element in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, namely the establishment of a Community of Serb Municipalities in Kosovo, it is clear that the Kosovo Albanian “leadership” is seeking, by hook or by crook, to prevent it from being implemented. The “authorities” in Pristina are continually derailing the negotiations and openly saying that no headway will be made at all until Serbia recognizes the quasi-statehood of Kosovo. It is telling that such tactics are fully supported by the United States of America and the European Union, which are demanding that the Serbian Government go through with a *de facto* recognition of Kosovo. What is more, a modest silence is being maintained on the Brussels agreements of 2013–2015, whereas the Ohrid agreements from February–March 2023, which are oral agreements and have not been signed by anyone, are being actively promoted. At the same time, the Kosovo “authorities” are being sent unequivocal encouraging messages by their Western patrons: visa-free travel to the Schengen area for Kosovars and support for the application for membership of the Council of Europe. The recent vote at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe flies defiantly in the face of international law – and of common sense for that matter. In the Council of Europe they are trying to ram through an aspiring member that is not even a State. The fact that a decision on the status of Kosovo has not been adopted by the United Nations Security Council does not seem to interest many people nowadays.

Let us give a reminder, then, for the benefit of those who have forgotten. A central role in the Kosovo settlement process is played by the United Nations. The search for a sustainable settlement must be in line with the well-known United Nations Security Council resolution 1244, which has not been rescinded by anyone. The solution reached must be acceptable to Serbia and the Serbian people, and it must also have the Security Council’s approval.

In closing, we should like to wish the distinguished Ambassador Davenport and the Mission team success in their mandated activities.

Thank you for your attention.