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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1298th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

14 January 2021

**On the presentation of the priorities of the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE and
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Ms. Ann Linde**

Madam Chairperson-in-Office,

We have listened attentively to your presentation. Sweden has taken over the helm of our Organization at a time when our customary way of being has been changed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The precarious global epidemiological situation comes on top of a deepening crisis of confidence in the OSCE area. The control mechanisms for politico-military security are degenerating. NATO's confrontational policy of "containing" Russia continues to inflame tensions. The principle of a "flexible" application of the norms and principles of international law is being postulated. The Organization's instruments are being used selectively.

But the Organization still has great potential. Its broad geographic scope and consensus rule for adopting decisions make it a unique tool for maintaining peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. We trust that the Swedish Chairmanship will work with unconditional respect for the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act, including respect for the sovereignty of States, non-intervention in internal affairs and the settlement of differences through dialogue based on facts rather than political speculation. Decisions by the decision-making bodies in line with the concept of comprehensive, co-operative, equal and indivisible security remain pivotal. It was in line with this concept that the Heads of State or Government decided at the OSCE Summit in Astana in 2010 to form a security community encompassing Europe and the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian areas. It is therefore unacceptable to try to replace this foundation with some kind of "European security order".

In the face of the numerous challenges, improving the effectiveness of the OSCE is more urgently required than ever. Last year, we put forward a proposal to start a consultation process on how such an improvement might be achieved, taking into account the considerable *acquis* within our Organization. We call on the Chairmanship to fully implement this initiative as soon as possible.

There should be closer co-operation with the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation on the basis of the Platform for Co-operative Security.

We hope that the work of the Forum for Security Co-operation and the Structured Dialogue will be conducted in a professional manner so as to de-escalate politico-military tensions.

A constructive approach to resolving the internal Ukrainian conflict and facilitating direct dialogue between the sides – the Government of Ukraine and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk – within the Minsk-based Trilateral Contact Group is needed. Security measures should be accompanied by proper implementation of the political provisions of the Package of Measures. In the context of the pandemic, Ukraine's socio-economic blockade of life in Donbas looks particularly heartless. We expect the Swedish Chairmanship to ensure that the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine works impartially and that the Mission conducts balanced monitoring on both sides of the line of contact, as well as paying due attention to the situation in the rest of Ukraine in accordance with its mandate. This is extremely relevant in the light of the Ukrainian Government's increasing discrimination against the non-Ukrainian-speaking population.

We trust that the OSCE can make a positive contribution to a Nagorno-Karabakh settlement, restore the momentum of the talks on Transdniestria in the "5+2" format and promote effective contacts between representatives of the Trans-Caucasian States – Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia – in the framework of the Geneva International Discussions. We call for work on Kosovo to be conducted in a status-neutral manner in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244.

It is important to maintain the OSCE's high profile in countering the full range of new challenges. There is a need to focus on those issues that pose a direct threat to the lives and health of our citizens, without unduly highlighting the gender and human rights aspects.

The fight against terrorism has top priority. There is a need to put a stop to financial and material support for terrorists and to focus on the problems posed by foreign terrorist fighters and the spread of terrorist ideology, including via the Internet and social media. The main role here is played by State structures. Their efforts cannot be replaced by the activities of non-State actors, including civil society and business, which can only play a supporting role.

We are willing to develop co-operation in the field of cyber/information and communication technology security. This issue has shown great potential in recent years, also thanks to the informal working group. Confidence-building measures should be implemented to reduce the risks of conflict in this sphere, while avoiding the militarization of the information space, interference in the internal affairs of States and the violation of their digital sovereignty.

We share Sweden's desire to maintain a focus on countering organized crime. We call for more attention to be paid to the fight against drug trafficking. Our Organization has a strong mandate for this, as well as the expertise and closely aligned co-operation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

We are not in favour of the plans to hold a non-consensus conference on security sector governance and reform in the autumn. This is outside the OSCE's remit. The limited resources should not be diverted to promote an issue that is not backed by a corresponding mandate and does not enjoy a shared understanding among participating States.

Preserving the constructive nature of the economic and environmental dimension remains an important task. We support Sweden's choice of creating opportunities for the equal economic participation of women as the main theme of the 29th Economic and Environmental Forum. We are willing to share Russia's experience in promoting the role of women in economic affairs.

A focus is also required on overcoming the economic consequences of the spread of the coronavirus. There is a need to help rebuild industries affected by the pandemic, in particular the tourism industry, develop trade and transport connectivity, and simplify customs and border procedures in the interests of aligning integration processes in the OSCE area and forming a Greater Eurasian Partnership.

As always, we are counting on the expert support of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.

Reform of the human dimension “basket”, which is the most politicized, is long overdue. The thematic and geographical imbalances are in serious need of correction. The OSCE human rights institutions are not at all autonomous, but accountable to the participating States, and they must adhere strictly to their mandates and the instructions from the decision-making bodies. We can do without a repeat of last year’s management crisis.

We call on the Swedish Chairmanship to agree in good time on a “package” of events for 2021. The pandemic, which has significantly undermined people’s standard of living, means that the protection of social and economic rights should be a priority.

Manifestations of racism, neo-Nazism, aggressive nationalism and xenophobia are a direct threat to the security of our ethnically and religiously diverse societies. It is imperative to combat the glorification of Nazism and the falsification of history.

Protecting the linguistic and educational rights of national minorities and communities and combating discrimination on the basis of religion should remain among the priorities. Measures are needed to prevent insults to the religious feelings of believers, incitement to interreligious hatred and religiously motivated conflicts. The task set at the 2014 OSCE Ministerial Council in Basel of preparing Ministerial Council Declarations on combating Christianophobia and Islamophobia is still relevant.

Attention needs to be paid to children’s rights, the situation of migrants, the elimination of statelessness, non-interference in private and family life, and discrimination in sport. The same applies to combating trafficking in human beings, including for the purposes of sexual exploitation and the removal of human organs, tissues and cells. Gender equality should be ensured through the provision of equal opportunities, not through the artificial imposition of gender quotas.

Against the backdrop of the recent global cleansing of the information space and online resources by leading private information technology companies, we note Sweden’s intention to promote media freedom. Uncontrolled private censorship on the World Wide Web, imposed on all of us by some kind of “terms of service”, is unacceptable. The right of access to information must be ensured.

There is an urgent need to develop together a common methodology for election observation. The so-called “gold standard” of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has turned out to be a cheap imitation.

We note the Chairmanship’s efforts to find an OSCE Unified Budget for 2021 that is acceptable to all. The second budget proposal is a step in the right direction, although there is not yet agreement on a number of aspects. There is no justification for the real increase in the ODIHR’s expenditure. But we are ready to engage constructively in the discussion to get the budget adopted as soon as possible.

We trust that the Chairmanship will not deviate from consensus approaches, functioning strictly within the framework of the 2002 Porto Ministerial Council decision on the role of the

Chairmanship-in-Office and the 2002 Permanent Council Decision No. 485 on OSCE statements and public information. We reject your comment on Crimea, Madam Chairperson-in-Office. The peninsula became an integral part of the Russian Federation as a result of the democratic choice of the people in full compliance with international law.

To conclude, to quote the Prime Minister of Sweden, Stefan Löfven, during the Fifth International Arctic Forum in St. Petersburg in 2019: “On some political issues we have the same views, on other issues we have different views. But I think there are issues that are of common interest and they should definitely be developed.” The Swedish Government can always count on Russian support for initiatives that will contribute to sustainable peace and unity. The recent experience of the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Tirana also demonstrated this.

We hope that you personally – and the entire Swedish Chairmanship – can work effectively as a truly “honest broker”.

Thank you for your attention.