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**STATEMENT BY MR. DMITRY BALAKIN,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1146th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 May 2017

**In response to the report by the
Head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, Ambassador Natalya Drozd**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are pleased to welcome Ambassador Natalya Drozd. We thank her for her informative report on the activities of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat.

We acknowledge the Centre's collaboration with the authorities of Turkmenistan within the framework of a reliable mechanism for co-ordinating the mission's project activities. The high level of such co-operation is key to the success of any OSCE field presence, which, as we know, should be aimed at strengthening the national capacity of the host country.

We welcome the Centre's activities in the framework of the first dimension. We note the efforts to ensure the security of Turkmenistan's land borders, primarily through the implementation of a project training Turkmen border guards. Assistance in this area is of obvious value in the context of the continuing instability in neighbouring Afghanistan, and therefore the added value of the Afghan border guards' involvement in the project is beyond doubt.

The assessments of the general state of affairs in the region, especially in the area of the Turkmen-Afghan border, are interesting.

No less useful is the Centre's contribution to building Turkmenistan's counter-terrorism capabilities by enhancing air transport security and protecting critical infrastructure. The Centre's collaboration with the Turkmen authorities in such areas as combating corruption, money laundering and the financing of terrorism is seen as desirable. We welcome efforts to build the capacity to respond to the consequences of natural disasters, and the contribution to reforming the country's penitentiary system.

Another important area is the support of the Turkmen agencies' capabilities in countering the drug threat. We trust that this topic will be given more attention in the reports on the Centre's work.

In general, we consider it necessary for OSCE missions to fully disclose information about their ongoing projects. All of these, we will recall, are implemented "under the flag" of our common Organization, which naturally implies broad awareness of all OSCE participating States about them. This is a necessary condition for effective and informed discussion of the budgets of field presences in Central Asia.

With regard to the issues raised by the representative of Malta (on behalf of the European Union) and of the United States of America about the critical assessments of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights with regard to the presidential elections of 12 February 2017, we recall that those elections were also monitored by an observation mission from the Commonwealth of Independent States.

That mission came to the conclusion that the elections were held in accordance with the Constitution and the Electoral Code of Turkmenistan and complied with generally accepted international norms for holding democratic elections. The elections were well-organized, transparent, open, free and competitive.

We call on Western countries to take into account the full range of assessments.

Mr. Chairperson,

We appreciate the very intensive political dialogue between Russia and Turkmenistan, which, in a spirit of strategic partnership, allows us to address important issues on the bilateral agenda, and strengthen co-operation at the international level. Our countries occupy a unified position in favour of a political settlement of the problems that remain in Afghanistan. Russia and Turkmenistan have always been in favour of ensuring that Central Asia remains a region of peace and good-neighbourliness.

In conclusion, we should like to wish Ambassador Drozd and her team success in their useful work in Turkmenistan.

Thank you for your attention.