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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1324th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 July 2021

Review of co-operation with the OSCE's Mediterranean Partners

Madam Chairperson,

We welcome the distinguished representatives of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

Russia pursues the systematic development and strengthening of political dialogue and practical co-operation with the OSCE's Mediterranean Partners on issues relating to comprehensive security that are of mutual interest. In this we are guided by the provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and subsequent documents of the Organization indicating that security in Europe is inextricably linked to the situation in the Mediterranean.

The pandemic that swept across the world confirmed the importance of co-ordinating the efforts of participating States and partner countries both in combating the spread of the coronavirus infection and in tackling its social and economic consequences. We note with satisfaction the discussion in the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group that took place on 15 March on the prospects for post-COVID-19 recovery as seen from the angle of opportunities and challenges for security and regional co-operation.

The Group's meeting on 10 May confirmed that working out responses to contemporary and evolving global challenges and threats, such as transnational organized crime, can be successful only if international efforts are undertaken jointly. We stand ready to continue exchanging best practices in tackling shared problems.

A no less important task is to unlock the potential of young people and develop human capital in the Mediterranean region: this was the focus of the discussion on 12 July.

Such consultations in the framework of the Group remain an effective mechanism for maintaining contact with our partners. We call for such interaction to occur on a more regular basis. It is essential to draw up an intensive work programme for the Group and to include in the agenda of its meetings the most relevant international issues of interest both to participating States and to partner countries. In our view, more attention should be paid to confidence-building and reducing conflict potential in the region, restoring

severed commercial and economic ties, strengthening the transport connectivity of States and aligning integration processes in the Eurasian space.

The annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference is an important form of co-operation. We support the proposal by the future Polish OSCE Chairmanship to hold such an event on 12 and 13 October 2021 devoted to post-pandemic recovery and security in the OSCE and Mediterranean regions. We appreciate the fact that a rich agenda has been prepared for it. We are counting on engaged and fruitful discussions.

It is important to continue actively sharing with partner countries the knowledge and professional expertise accumulated at the OSCE so as to promote common values and assist our partners with the voluntary implementation of their OSCE commitments.

An essential role in that respect is played by the Partnership Fund, which was established in 2007. The operating rules of the Fund, as set out in Permanent Council Decision No. 812, provide for its resources to be used exclusively in the OSCE area, with any extrabudgetary activity outside the territory of the participating States (outreach) being subject to approval by the OSCE decision-making bodies. We believe it is important to maintain this procedure, which ensures control over the use of extrabudgetary funds while clearly establishing a list of projects and countries in which they will be used.

We advocate increasing the OSCE's co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners and call for a more active involvement of their representatives in the day-to-day work of the Organization.

Thank you for your attention.