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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

**In response to the address by
the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,
H.E. George Tsereteli**

Mr. Tsereteli,

We are pleased to welcome you once again to the OSCE Permanent Council. We have listened attentively to your statement and agree with your pessimistic assessment of the security situation.

The potential for conflict is indeed growing in Europe and the world. This is all due to the unwillingness of various countries to accept the reality of the polycentric world that is evidently emerging and attempts to impose their will by means of force, and by economic and propaganda leverage, and to interfere in the internal affairs of other States and their constitutional powers. We are observing attempts to move the dividing lines eastwards, to promote NATO-centrism as the only effective model for the structure of Europe in place of the indivisibility of security and to replace the universal norms of international law by some kind of “rules-based procedure”. The attempt to push through various non-consensus initiatives and to elaborate in secret a “small circle of selected decisions” and to present them as the opinion of the international community gives cause for concern. Unilateral actions aimed at destroying international legal instruments for safeguarding strategic stability do not make things more optimistic either. All this leads to a widening deficit in mutual trust and the militarization of foreign policy thinking.

This dynamic can be put right only through a rejection of confrontational rhetoric and megaphone diplomacy and a return to mutually respectful dialogue. Interparliamentary co-operation has a special role in this and it is for that reason that we have always supported the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. We are confident that parliamentary contacts, together with the work of intergovernmental bodies, can help to overcome the crisis of confidence between OSCE States and to restore mutually beneficial co-operation. As President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, you can make a full contribution to this, and it is very important in this regard to be optimistic.

In order to improve the effectiveness and relevance of the Assembly, there is a need to identify unifying themes touching the interests of all countries in the OSCE area – and there is no shortage of them.

This applies first of all to anti-terrorist activities. It is important to continue focusing attention on this topic and to support the work of the Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism as much as possible. It would be interesting to hear what kind of events are being planned to strengthen co-operation with other parliamentary associations, in particular the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and to combat international terrorism and the spread of terrorist propaganda and ideology and counter the financing of terrorism.

There is also a common interest in discussing connectivity and the alignment of integration process in the OSCE area. We should like to know what kind of proposals the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's International Secretariat has worked out for holding a pilot pan-European parliamentary forum to discuss these questions.

We share the opinion regarding the seriousness of the challenges posed by the migration crisis, which is the result of an irresponsible policy of interference in the affairs of the Middle East and North Africa. We agree with the concern expressed at the growth of nationalist rhetoric and the extreme right-wing climate in Europe. You quoted the British philosopher Bertrand Russell on war. We say: "A bad peace is better than a good war." Our common task is thus to prevent a repetition of the tragedies of the last century. It is therefore extremely important not to close our eyes to the manifestations of neo-Nazism and aggressive nationalism and not to permit the falsification of history or the use of doublespeak. We urge the Parliamentary Assembly to pay greater attention to preserving traditional values, combating Christianophobia and Islamophobia, safeguarding economic, social and cultural rights, protecting national minorities and children, and refusing to accept media segregation. It is important to react promptly to violations of language, education and religious rights.

All these questions need to be given priority at forthcoming Parliamentary Assembly events. The authority of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as a platform for constructive and mutually respectful discussions depends on the way it sets about dealing with these problems.

Mr. Tsereteli,

You began your statement by mentioning the reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, which contain statistics on ceasefire violations. Indeed, the Christmas/New Year truce was broken within a day of its announcement. Some Ukrainian soldiers admitted to the Mission that they did not receive any orders to observe the truce. We have also noted your information that Assembly representatives visited the east of Ukraine in December to study the humanitarian problems. We believe that it is impossible to form an objective picture of the humanitarian situation in this region without a comprehensive approach and a visit to certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. How is it possible to judge what is happening there without visiting that part of the country in person or to do so on the basis of information from just one party to the conflict? It would mean losing a unique opportunity to listen to the civilian population on the other side of the line of contact and to see the consequences of the Ukrainian shelling on the ground – the killing of civilians and the

destruction of houses and civilian infrastructure. Otherwise it is impossible to make an impartial assessment of what is happening in Donbas.

Such an analysis is also impossible without an objective assessment of the implementation of the Minsk agreements, which you also mentioned in your statement. It is evident that there has been no progress in the implementation of the political provisions of this document – an amnesty, the special status of Donbas, and constitutional reform. There is also no direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk. We trust that the Parliamentary Assembly will take a comprehensive and impartial approach to the way in which the settlement process is being carried out. This is the only way in which it can help to bring peace to Donbas.

In your statement you also mention “military incidents”, particularly “linked to the militarization of the Azov Sea”. We spoke about this issue in detail at OSCE Permanent Council meetings in November and December. Russia provided detailed information on the movements of the Ukrainian navy boats and the testimony of the detained Ukrainian sailors. We suggest that the Assembly leadership studies this material attentively in order to obtain an objective picture and to evaluate this Ukrainian provocation.

We have also noted the intention of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to observe the presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine. But we do not see any reaction by the Assembly to the statement by Mr. Pavlo Klimkin, Ukraine’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, that Ukraine will not allow Russian observers, even as part of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights mission. No less outrageous is the refusal by the Ukrainian Government to open polling stations on Russian territory. This will prevent millions of Ukrainians living in our country from exercising their right to express their will. With the election campaign starting in this way, the transparency and the legitimacy of the results are already called into question.

Mr. Tsereteli,

The OSCE participating States face many common challenges. However, the prospects for co-operation are often held hostage to politicized approaches or geopolitical games. This impacts on the security of the citizens of our countries, whose care is our collective priority. A concerted effort is therefore needed to find a response to the multiplying threats, coming for the most part from outside the OSCE area. This must be done on the basis of consensus, a principle established by the OSCE’s founding fathers. Any departure from it or attempts to reform are ill-advised. Russia is willing to participate in mutually respectful dialogue and constructive work, not least in the framework of the interparliamentary dialogue at the forthcoming Winter Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Vienna.

Thank you for your attention.