

PC.DEL/1235/15
18 September 2015

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1068th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 September 2015

In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje

Mr. Chairperson,

We are pleased to welcome Ms. Nina Suomalainen in her new role as Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje. We thank her for her extensive report on the assistance provided by the field presence to the Macedonian authorities to overcome the challenging problems facing them.

Last year, the OSCE Mission to Skopje had to work under complex conditions, which required all the Mission's employees, including its former Head Ambassador Ralf Breth, to display their best professional qualities.

We welcome the fact that the Macedonian authorities have been able to stabilize the domestic political situation in the country. We have always maintained our stance against inflaming political passions in Macedonia, which could have a negative effect on stability across the entire Balkan region. Thanks to the determination and responsible action of the country's leadership, the major crisis, which was provoked by the opposition with outside support, was resolved strictly within the constitutional and legal frameworks. The Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the Western Balkans, Gérard Stoudmann, and the OSCE Mission played a useful role in achieving this result. We welcome the agreements reached on 2 June and 15 July 2015 in Skopje through the intermediary of the European Union between the authorities and the opposition. We assume that they will be respected. We trust that the early parliamentary elections in April 2016 will put an end to the current political confrontation in Macedonia. We hope that they will take place in a calm atmosphere and will give the Macedonian citizens themselves the opportunity to express their views on recent events through direct democracy. We expect that the Special Representative and the Mission will continue to follow developments closely and provide necessary assistance to the Macedonian authorities, upon their request.

We are alarmed by the lack of an appropriate response by Western countries and international organizations, including the OSCE, to the attacks by extremists in Gošince on 21 April and Kumanovo on 9 and 10 May, and their apparent unwillingness to tell it like it is.

It is also puzzling that the warnings made to our partners of terrorist plots have fallen on deaf ears. It is clear that the threat of extremism from Kosovo continues to present a serious risk to Macedonia.

It is very significant that the actions of radicals, as rightly noted by the OSCE Mission, “did not find support among the citizens of Macedonia”. Yet this cannot be cause for complacency. Unfortunately, attempts to exploit the ethnic factor are not isolated and occur not only in Macedonia but also in other parts of the Balkans. We consider the use of coercive measures in Macedonia, particularly backed by outside forces, to be unacceptable. New attempts to employ “street democracy” for political struggle are unacceptable since such methods run the risk of large-scale destabilization, which can lead to catastrophic consequences for the whole region. A purely Macedonian issue could then turn into a real problem for the entire Balkans with all the consequences that would ensue, including for the European Union.

Skopje is justified in counting on effective international assistance in its efforts to counter the terrorist threat and restore stability and law and order in problem regions. We expect that all similar episodes will be carefully investigated and the guilty parties brought to justice.

We support the efforts of the field presence to provide assistance to Macedonian government institutions in terms of securing the rule of law, improving the work of law enforcement bodies and reforming the justice system. We consider it important to continue efforts through the Police Development Unit to provide assistance in combating organized crime, extremism, trafficking in human beings and the illicit trade in weapons and drugs.

We hope that the Mission will continue to consistently support efforts to counter inter-ethnic tensions and ensure equal rights of ethnic communities in full conformity with key objectives, namely assistance in implementing the provisions of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, harmonizing inter-ethnic relations and strengthening mutual understanding between communities as the basis for maintaining peace and stability in the country.

We wish you, Ambassador, and your team every success in your work.

Thank you for your attention.