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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1118th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

10 November 2016

**In response to the address by the Deputy Foreign Minister for
Economic Co-operation of Afghanistan, Ms. Adela Raz**

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the distinguished Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Co-operation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ms. Adela Raz, to this OSCE Permanent Council meeting. We have listened carefully to her assessments of the current situation in Afghanistan, its co-operation with the OSCE and the development of economic projects in the country.

We support the Afghan Government's policy for achieving national reconciliation. Russia is systematically assisting Afghanistan in becoming a peaceful, independent, stable and self-sufficient State free of terrorism and drug trafficking. The training of Afghan personnel for government institutions and police, anti-drug and military structures of the Republic at Russian educational establishments is our significant contribution. For example, this year alone, 354 grants were awarded to Afghan civilian specialists to enable them to study in our country, and 49 cadets from the Afghan National Army were sent to study at Russian military academies. In December 2016, the next training course for Afghan drug police will take place with the OSCE's support at the All-Russian Institute for Continuing Professional Development of Employees of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Let me now say a few words about economic co-operation. The third meeting of the Russian-Afghan Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Co-operation was held at the ministerial level from 1 to 3 March 2016 in Kabul. Over 50 representatives of ministries and departments of the two countries as well as Russian and Afghan companies took part in the events. A draft intergovernmental agreement on the promotion and reciprocal protection of investments was finalized at the expert level, and a number of other important documents were prepared to help our Afghan friends strengthen their economy.

In recent years, the security situation in Afghanistan has been receiving increased attention from the international community. Unfortunately, the situation is getting worse, and this is greatly hampering economic reforms. Unprecedented terrorist activity continues, and

the statistics regarding civilian casualties as a result of the hostilities are consistently high. The armed opposition and terrorist formations are attempting to capture strategically important towns and villages and take control of vast areas of the country. The growing influence and numerical strength of the so-called Islamic State and its desire to absorb other armed units is particularly worrying.

The situation is exacerbated by the frequent cases of fatalities among the civilian population during operations by the United States of America and NATO members. A recent tragic example was the US air strike on Kunduz on 3 November, as result of which over 30 civilians were killed, mainly women and children including a three-month-old infant. We recall that gross violations of international humanitarian law like this could be regarded as war crimes.

The illegal drug trade poses a serious threat to the stability of Afghanistan, its neighbours and the OSCE area as a whole. According to the latest report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the drug crops have quadrupled in the northern provinces of Afghanistan that border on Central Asian countries. Narcotics production provides substantial resources for financing terrorism – up to 40 per cent or 500 million dollars in monetary terms. It is telling that after making inroads in Afghanistan the first thing the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant did was take control of this region.

We welcome the active efforts of the Afghan Government to combat this evil. The international community, including Russia, provides Afghanistan with constant assistance, but as yet it is not enough to turn the situation around. There needs to be more concerted efforts on the part of all countries to stamp out drug trafficking.

The Afghan leadership has many difficult tasks ahead of it. As a priority, these include ensuring stable peace and the security of all its citizens, establishing civil harmony, developing the economy and combating drug production and its export beyond the country's borders. The OSCE should provide Afghanistan, as a Partner for Co-operation, with appropriate assistance to that end.

Thank you for your attention.