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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1154th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 July 2017

**On the situation in Ukraine and the
need to implement the Minsk agreements**

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation as regards the implementation of the Minsk agreements remains highly unsatisfactory. Despite some encouraging developments – for example, the fact that last weekend the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) did not record a single shell explosion in the Luhansk region – the complete ceasefire that the Ukrainian Government promised would coincide with the start of the harvest season has not happened. The shelling resumed after the weekend.

The SMM reports indicate a sequence of the exchanges of fire in one of the worst hotspots – around Avdiivka. The first shots come from the Ukrainian security forces. This happened on 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 July.

The shelling of militia-controlled towns in Donbas shows no sign of stopping. There are reports virtually every day about the destruction of or damage to residential buildings. Three houses were destroyed on Zeleniy Gay Street and Karnavalnaya Street in the village of Trudivske as a result of shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces on 10 July. Four houses were damaged in Dokuchaievsk on Poleyvaya Street and Lenin Street.

The Ukrainian armed forces continue to mass heavy weapons near the withdrawal lines. In its report dated 5 July, the SMM recorded a camouflaged Uragan multiple-launch rocket system in Myroliubivka. A group of 13 howitzers and self-propelled howitzers, including a heavy-duty Pion self-propelled howitzer, was also discovered there.

Effective measures that would lead to a real reduction in firing at the line of contact are needed. Unfortunately, some statements about the expectation of some kind of “first steps” from Moscow only make this more unlikely. It is not Russia or the militia that are shelling Donetsk and Horlivka. Not even the Ukrainian Government believes the disinformation about the “militia shelling their own lines”.

This approach gives the Ukrainian authorities a sense of impunity, as does putting forward additional conditions not mentioned in the Minsk Package of Measures for substantive dialogue on the implementation of the political aspects of a settlement.

In this context, we are attentively monitoring the discussions in Ukraine on the new draft law on the “reintegration” of Donbas. We are concerned that this document may conflict with the Minsk agreements and call into question the holding of local elections in Donbas and the prospects for the enactment of the laws on special status and amnesty. The fact that the discussion of this new initiative is taking place against the backdrop of increasingly bellicose rhetoric and threats of resorting to force is also worrying.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to move forward and to overcome the impasse in the implementation of the Minsk agreements. This is possible only by intensifying and increasing the effectiveness of direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group. We trust that the meeting on 13 July will be productive in this regard.

Arguments about the “hybrid troops” are another case of wishful thinking. As long as there is a demand for creating an enemy image in the form of Russia, we will hear such claims, even if the Ukrainian officials themselves – for example, the notorious Heorhiy Tuka, Deputy Minister for the so-called Occupied Territories – complain that during the three years of conflict no one has managed to demonstrate the presence of the Russian army in Donbas.

Without such slogans, it is difficult to justify a policy aimed at severing all the long-standing family, historical, cultural, commercial and economic ties between the peoples of Ukraine and Russia.

Every week brings new and ever more surprising news about the measures being taken by the current Ukrainian authorities to kindle animosity. Additional steps are being contemplated to make it more difficult to enter Ukraine from Russian territory. Naturally, we will have to respond to these measures.

The policy of banning the Russian language from all spheres of public and political life continues. Yet another non-governmental organization – the Russian Cultural Centre of the Sumy Region – has come under pressure from the intelligence agencies.

Another fanciful initiative is the proposal to ban the Russian cartoon *Masha and the Bear*.

The Ukrainian representatives periodically speak of Russia’s alleged intention to destroy Ukrainian statehood. This is completely at odds with reality. Russia, just like Ukraine’s other neighbours, has an interest in stability on its borders and a strong State that is not tainted by discord, neo-Nazism and Russophobia. So far no one has done more to destroy Ukrainian statehood than those who inspired and organized the Maidan coup.

The longer nationalism continues to be promoted, the more difficult it will be to restore what has been destroyed and to achieve reconciliation within Ukrainian society. So far we prefer to say nothing in the OSCE about the glorification of Bandera and Shukhevych, who were behind the Jewish pogroms, the Volyn massacre and other most serious crimes.

In conclusion, I should like to recall that the first step to ending this crisis in Ukraine is the implementation of the Minsk agreements. There is no alternative. We hope that our Ukrainian and Western colleagues will come to understand the need for their implementation before the price paid by the Ukrainian people becomes too high. For our part, we shall continue to work intensively on achieving this goal in all the formats available to us.

Thank you for your attention.