

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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AT THE 1102nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We are compelled to note that the negotiations in Minsk within the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups are clearly not moving forward enough for us to count on a swift solution to the key questions of security and political reforms in Ukraine. The Ukrainian authorities are stubbornly refusing to implement their commitments under the Package of Measures, meaning that many tasks still remain in the political sphere.

It is essential to reach an agreement on the modalities for local elections in Donbas and amendments to the law on the special status of the region, and to implement the provision of the Package of Measures on pardon and amnesty by enacting the law prohibiting the prosecution and punishment of persons in connection with the events that took place in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, and to carry out comprehensive constitutional reform. It is clear that these questions should be resolved in a single package, since they are all closely interlinked.

We recall that reinstatement of full control of the State border by the Government of Ukraine is one of the very last stages of the implementation of the Package of Measures, which is preceded by a comprehensive political settlement in the form of constitutional reform.

Direct dialogue between the parties to the Ukrainian conflict is a prerequisite for a peaceful settlement of the Ukrainian crisis. Other formats, such as bilateral contacts and the Normandy quartet, should facilitate the search for constructive solutions, but they cannot and should not replace direct dialogue. Ultimately, it is Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk and not Moscow, Berlin, Paris or Washington that have to find a way of coexisting in a single State.

We urge caution in statements regarding the arming of monitors from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) or any kind of armed police mission. All questions concerning elections in Donbas, including their security, should be resolved within

the Trilateral Contact Group with the representatives of Donbas. Unilateral statements and propaganda leaks not only considerably exacerbate the SMM's working conditions, but also introduce chaos and confusion into the negotiating process. Yesterday's statement by the Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of Ukraine, Kostiantyn Yelisieiev, is a clear example of this. In a wishful thinking approach, he distorted the content of the Package of Measures and twisted the agreement of the Normandy quartet leaders on arrangements for future consultations.

The situation at the line of contact remains tense. A few days ago, Ukrainian security forces attempted to seize additional territory in the Avdiivka-Yasynuvata area. If there is to be a complete ceasefire in Donbas, it is essential that the armed forces and nationalist formations be withdrawn to a safe distance from towns and villages. Decisions regarding de-escalation should be adopted either within the Trilateral Contact Group's subgroup on security issues or the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination with the involvement of the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk, as was the case in 2014. These decisions should be implemented with the support and monitoring of the SMM. We are in favour of increasing the SMM's role and responsibility and stepping up its patrols in the security zone and its monitoring of both sides' heavy weapons storage sites.

Orders by the Ukrainian command, if they were of course in fact given, are not working. A particular danger is posed by nationalist groups like the one operating under a red and black flag that yelled insults at an SMM patrol near Yasynuvata on 27 May and then evidently fired two shots in their direction.

On 30 May, visibly intoxicated Ukrainian soldiers hurled aggressive insults at SMM monitors and chased them away from a storage site for weapons that had been withdrawn. Incidents involving careless handling of ammunition, friendly fire and the triggering of their own minefields are becoming increasingly frequent. All this is leading to an increase in losses among the Ukrainian security forces. Unprovoked shelling of militia-controlled territory poses a particular danger, and, as the SMM reports, it is impossible to predict when or where this will happen.

Civilians suffer the most as a result of this shelling. Infrastructure and residential buildings are being destroyed. During the past week alone, according to the SMM, four residential buildings and a gas pipeline were destroyed in Dokuchaievsk, a kindergarten, three multi-storey houses, at least four detached houses and a gas pipeline were damaged in Donetsk, two houses, a kindergarten and a church suffered damage in Staromykhailivka, and a detached house was destroyed in Kominternove. We call on the SMM to provide more detailed coverage of the consequences of shelling in its reports. A summarized thematic report is long overdue on the targets of the shelling and the destruction on both sides.

Both sides are restricting the freedom of movement of the SMM monitors. The greater incidence by the militias is a result of the routes taken by the SMM patrols and the different degree to which the parties are informed of planned visits to storage sites. If the SMM were to patrol government-controlled territory as carefully and unexpectedly, the number of violations by the Ukrainian forces would be comparable or even higher. Attempts by some colleagues to make it look as if the militias have something to hide and the Ukrainian security forces do not are astonishing.

It appears once again from our colleagues' statements that they are little interested in the question of freedom of the media, freedom of association and the observance of human rights in Ukraine. Everything boils down to accusations against Russia and the militias, and the situation of the Crimean Tatars, who for the most part do not even live in Ukraine but in Russia. The situation of other population groups – Russians, Romanians, Poles, Hungarians, and so on – is ignored. Perhaps our colleagues are afraid that if they pay too much attention to these questions, their names and personal details will end up on the Ukrainian Mirotvorets website inciting extrajudicial violence, which, by the way, has resumed its work. I should like to draw attention in that connection to an article by the American columnist Ian Bateson in *The New York Times* on 31 May 2016 under the headline “Ukraine Declares War on Journalism”.

Incidentally, Ian Bateson and over 100 foreign correspondents ended up on the Mirotvorets list simply because they were registered with the Donetsk and Luhansk authorities so that they could carry out their professional activities in Donbas.