

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
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AT THE 1148th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 June 2017

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

Mr. Chairperson,

Let me begin by reminding you that today is International Children's Day. Too many children have been killed or have suffered in the course of the Ukrainian authorities' punitive operation against the people of Donbas. Even one lost life is one too many. Over the past three years, 151 children have been killed by the Ukrainian security forces' shells, mines and bombs. We truly hope that the agreement reached on a complete ceasefire along the entire line of contact will, as of today, be strictly observed, and that any attempts to wreck it will be dealt with decisively. The Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination should monitor compliance with that agreement. We trust that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) will, to the best of its abilities, also make a contribution to that end.

The situation in Ukraine is a cause of growing concern. Although the methods of twentieth-century totalitarianism are also condemned in Kyiv in words, in practice we are seeing the most serious infringement of rights and freedoms in recent decades. There is a clampdown on dissent and a demonization of anything that is connected with the Russian language and the shared history of the peoples of Russia and Ukraine.

Despite public discontent and protests by journalists, on 26 May, the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada, Andriy Parubiy, signed the law on quotas for broadcasting in the Russian language, which significantly restricts the right of Ukraine's Russian-speaking population to receive information in their native tongue and participate in political and public life. Russian Internet resources and software have been banned. Intelligence services are conducting searches in Yandex's company office. On 23 May, the First Deputy Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada, Iryna Herashchenko, proposed blocking further news websites in Donetsk and Luhansk. We expect to see language quotas for print media, a ban on satellite dishes and the erection of ill-famed towers to jam radio and television signals.

The persecution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and attempts to seize church property by force continue.

In the style of the old Soviet era, something the current Ukrainian Government recalls with shame, there is serious talk about the idea of bringing in a new “iron curtain” with a requirement for Ukrainian citizens to declare whether or not they have relatives in Russia.

We have been drawing attention to the problem of neo-Nazism in Ukraine since long before the events on the Kyiv Maidan. Support for aggressive nationalism is an important element of Kyiv’s State policy. I could cite countless examples, but I shall limit myself for the time being to just one – on 18 May, the director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance (just take note of the fact that such an institution exists), Volodymyr Viatrovykh, said in an interview with *Strana*, an online publication, that the symbols of the Galician SS Division, which are widely used by Ukrainian neo-Nazis, do not fall under the Law of Ukraine on the condemnation of the Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and the ban on displaying their symbols.

Reports by international organizations, including the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, have repeatedly made reference to the crimes committed against civilians on a massive scale by members of the nationalist battalions. On 28 May, commenting on the arrest for murder of two members of the Azov regiment, the Military Prosecutor, Anatoly Matios, said that “the people concerned are real heroes by day, but at night they are under such psychological stress that they do not assess the situation properly.” There is currently a campaign under way in Ukraine to “understand and forgive” all these “heroes”. For this purpose, the nationalists are even seizing regional government buildings, as has happened in Lviv. The Azov commander is promising that such actions will occur across Ukraine.

The lack of response on the part of some of our OSCE colleagues, who are usually extremely active when it comes to other matters, is a clear confirmation of how entrenched double standards are in their political thinking.

Unfortunately, the Ukrainian Government continues its targeted policy of eradicating a whole set of cultural and historical values of Ukrainian society and suppressing the rights of those committed to these values. The events on the Kyiv Maidan were not at the origins of this policy; they merely gave it wings and empowered its most aggressive proponents.

All these questions have a direct bearing on the prospects for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. The influence of the nationalists and the war party on the authorities in Kyiv is one of the main obstacles to ensuring legal safeguards for the inhabitants of Donbas. The tension at the line of contact is used to justify the inability to implement the commitments under the Minsk Package of Measures.

The SMM is signalling the danger of an escalation at the line of contact. Between 26 and 28 May, the SMM camera at Shyrokyne recorded 1,166 projectiles in flight from territory controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces against militia-held positions and 4.5 times fewer rounds fired from the opposite direction.

Almost every day, monitors record the consequences of fresh indiscriminate shelling of militia-controlled towns and villages. This is just from what the SMM monitors were able to record: on 23 May, four houses were damaged in Dokuchaievsk as a result of shelling from a west-south-westerly direction, in other words from Ukrainian armed forces’ positions. The

report dated 24 May indicates that a civilian was injured and a house destroyed in Yakovlivka. On 25 May, the SMM reported that two women had been injured as a result of two artillery strikes (20 and 24 May) on bus stops in Donetsk (Trudivske), and another woman during the shelling of Kominternove. On 27 May, the SMM reported that a woman had been injured and a house destroyed in Holmivskiyi, and that a man had been injured at a bus stop in the Petrovsky district of Donetsk. On 29 May, the monitors reported damage to a house in Dokuchaievsk as a result of an artillery strike from the south-west, in other words from Ukrainian armed forces' positions, and also damage to a gas pipeline following the shelling of Kominternove. I draw our distinguished colleagues' attention to the fact that the affected areas of Donetsk, where three people have been injured as a result of shelling, are located near the line of contact across from Ukrainian armed forces-controlled Krasnohorivka (12 kilometres to the south-west).

The massing of military equipment immediately behind the withdrawal lines demonstrates that the Ukrainian armed forces are ready to switch to full-scale combat activities at any moment. In its weekly report dated 24 May, the SMM warned of the danger of keeping combat-ready weapons near the border of the so-called security zone. According to the reports for the period of 22 to 29 May, the Ukrainian armed forces deployed over 70 units of military equipment two hours' away on foot from the line of contact: 19 self-propelled howitzers in Lyman, 16 self-propelled howitzers and 1 anti-aircraft missile system in Zolotarivka, 12 self-propelled howitzers in Rubizhne, 5 tanks in Soledar, 2 tanks in Berestove, 1 tank in Yakolivka, 1 anti-aircraft missile system in Pidhorodne, 1 anti-aircraft missile system in Predtechyne, 1 tank in Artemivsk and 1 mortar in Dmytrivka.

Contrary to the decision of the Trilateral Contact Group on demining of 2 March 2016 and the letter from the Chief Monitor of the SMM, Ertuğrul Apakan, of 5 May 2017, the Ukrainian security forces are continuing to lay mines in Donbas. On 24 May, the monitors discovered three military trucks belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces in Sievierodonetsk, each of them carrying 50 anti-tank mines, and three PMZ-4 trailer mine layers, designed for the mechanized laying of non-controlled and command detonated mines. On the same day, the monitors saw two military trucks belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces loaded with "new" anti-tank mines in Artemivsk, less than 30 kilometres from the line of contact. On the other side of the line of contact, mine clearing operations are under way in Nikishyne.

Once again, the Ukrainian Government disrupted the disengagement of forces in Stanitsya Luhanska on 28 May. The SMM monitors reported that the militia were ready to withdraw their forces but that the Ukrainian armed forces were unwilling to do so.

On 30 May, a meeting of the deputy foreign ministers of the Normandy quartet took place in Berlin to facilitate a settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. We believe that the meeting was constructive on the whole and should give dynamic stimulus to the work of the Minsk Contact Group, which remains crucial to the implementation of the Package of Measures for a peaceful settlement of the conflict through direct dialogue among the Ukrainian parties to the conflict. There is no alternative to the Minsk agreements, and the Ukrainian Government's attempts to sidestep implementation by changing the formats and introducing new structures into the settlement process are counter-productive.

The Ukrainian Government's desire to link progress on political aspects of a settlement with the security situation, which it, however, constantly undermines, is unacceptable. We recall that it is essential to provide certain areas of the Donetsk and

Luhansk regions with a special status and to consolidate this in the Constitution, to declare an amnesty, to remove the checkpoint regime at the line of contact, to lift the blockade, to ensure the social and economic rehabilitation of the region, and to step up efforts to release and exchange prisoners and illegally detained persons based on the principle of “all for all”.

The blockade of the region, which is leading to a humanitarian disaster, must be lifted immediately. This applies in particular to the problems regarding the water supply and social security payments to the population. The Ukrainian Government should be asked whether it wants the inhabitants of Donbas to return to Ukraine or simply “to liberate that territory”.

Thank you for your attention.