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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1101st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 May 2016

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to draw our colleagues' attention to the telephone conversation between the leaders of the Normandy format on 24 May 2016. One of the most important outcomes of that conversation was the confirmation of the need for comprehensive implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures.

We have recently observed a host of pretexts and grounds under which the Ukrainian Government has sabotaged progress in the implementation of the political aspects of the Package of Measures.

First, there is the build-up of tension on the line of contact. The systematic and continuous movement of forward positions and the seizing of previously demilitarized territory is an obvious and deliberate action aimed at escalating tension. The most telling examples are the advance around Yasynuvata involving the shelling of the Donetsk-Horlivka highway and the movement of the checkpoint near Berezove and subsequent shelling of Olenivka. As Alexander Hug, Principal Deputy Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), emphasized in his briefing of 23 May 2016 in Vienna, the advance of the Ukrainian armed forces towards Olenivka resulted in an escalation of tension in that area, which is gradually turning into a new hotspot. We welcome the resumption of work at the militia-controlled entry-exit checkpoint near Olenivka, which was possible following the withdrawal from their positions of the 14th Detached Mechanized Brigade of the Ukrainian armed forces, which had been shelling the checkpoint. We call on the Ukrainian Government to alleviate the situation of the residents of Donbas by immediately removing the unlawful restrictions on the freedom of movement of citizens, who are subjected to threats as they queue for days at Ukrainian checkpoints. For example, during the night of 21 to 22 May, over 50 people passing through the militia-controlled checkpoint in Olenivka were forced to spend the night near the Ukrainian checkpoint, which the security forces had closed at 4 p.m. On 24 May, OSCE monitors reported that a man had died of a heart attack while queuing at a Ukrainian checkpoint in Stanytsia Luhanska.

We are also observing a systematic build-up of weapons in the security zone and the conduct of exercises with an attack scenario. On 14 May, the SMM reported that two mechanized battalions, including 31 T-64 tanks, 53 BMP-2 armoured infantry fighting vehicles, 2 armoured personnel carriers, 8 armoured vehicles and support vehicles had been transferred from the Dnipropetrovsk region. According to information from the monitors dated 20 May, security forces in Novoaidar were conducting a river-crossing offensive-assault exercise. There were reports of the shelling of positions belonging to the Donetsk People's Republic in Kominternove in the early hours of 23 May and of a Luhansk People's Republic checkpoint in Stanytsia Luhanska on the evening of 17 May. Ukrainian military equipment is reported virtually every day in the security zone in violation of the Package of Measures. On 20 May, the monitors observed 12 anti-tank guns in Zhelanne and Novozhelanne, while a further 3 anti-tank weapons were detected in Vodiane on 21 May. During verification measures at Ukrainian armed forces' depots between 16 and 24 May, 261 units of weaponry were discovered missing from these sites.

As regards the unmanned aerial vehicle reported by the SMM in April in Donbas, the Mission's reports talk about "an unidentified drone", while Alexander Hug's presentation from 23 May 2016 merely mentions the probable type of drone on the basis of an attached blurred photograph.

The Ukrainian Government has referred to the domestic political situation as an additional pretext for refusing to reach agreement on the modalities for elections in Donbas. First of all, it has not been possible to resolve the governmental crisis for several months. Now that a new Prime Minister had been appointed, the Azov nationalist group has come on the scene declaring that the implementation of the Minsk agreements would amount to capitulation. They are saying that the people demand that the agreements not be implemented. We note the surprising degree of organization and the staged histrionics and melodrama of the Azov group.

We believe it important to underscore that implementation of the Minsk agreements does not mean Ukraine's capitulation, but an opportunity to restore sovereignty, embark on a path towards restoring national harmony and to develop a model that would ensure the protection of the rights and interests of all segments of the population in all the regions of the country.

We regard the immediate end to the shelling by Ukrainian armed formations of towns and villages in Donbas as a priority task. While the reports from Kyiv as a rule mention losses among military personnel, the reports from the militias refer for the most part to the destruction of infrastructure and casualties among civilians. Incidentally, according to information available, so-called non-combat losses, as well as losses as a result of friendly fire skirmishes between the Ukrainian armed forces and volunteer battalions, account for a considerable percentage of the losses among Ukrainian military personnel. The SMM reports casualties among Ukrainian soldiers and inhabitants of the territory under the Ukrainian Government's control as a result of mines that have been laid by the security forces. On 18 May, a young man was killed in Pavlopil and another man received serious injuries when a tractor struck an anti-tank mine.

Decisions on de-escalation should be taken within the Trilateral Contact Group and implemented with the support and monitoring of the SMM and the Joint Centre for Control

and Co-ordination. The monitors' attention should be focused on the security zone, in particular on existing and potential hotspots.

As for the incident with the signal repeater in Donetsk, the circumstances surrounding it are being clarified. Our position regarding the need for more comprehensive, equal mirror monitoring on both sides of the line of contact in the security zone remains unchanged. We welcome the opening of the latest SMM forward patrol base in Shchastia.

Decisions on de-escalation can be implemented only if they are agreed upon with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. Trying to exclude them from a settlement, as the Ukrainian Government wishes to do, is counter-productive and will only drag out the process.

Contrary to what some representatives of Ukraine are saying, the question of arming SMM monitors or sending some kind of police mission to Donbas has not yet been agreed upon. It should be decided within the Trilateral Contact Group with the representatives of Donbas. Unilateral statements and propaganda leaks aggravate the working conditions of the SMM significantly and make it more difficult for the Mission to work together with the local authorities.

It is essential to agree upon 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. It would be useful to do this in a single package and to conduct comprehensive constitutional reform. Constructive proposals in this regard have been transmitted to our Normandy format colleagues. They are also well known to the members of the Trilateral Contact Group and its specialist subgroups.

In any case, we recall once more that point 9 of the Package of Measures provides for reinstatement of full control of the State border by the Ukrainian Government throughout the conflict area, starting on day one after the local elections and ending after the comprehensive political settlement.

We should also like to draw attention to the fact that the Ukrainian website Mirotvorets, which was temporarily closed down following the publication of a list of journalists accredited in Donbas, has resumed its work with a list of potential and real victims of extrajudicial violence in Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention.