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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1353rd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 February 2022

**On the deteriorating situation in Ukraine and the continued non-implementation by the
Ukrainian authorities of the Minsk agreements**

Mr. Chairperson,

Over the past few weeks, during discussions at the OSCE Permanent Council, representatives of a number of participating States that can safely be called the foreign handlers of the current Ukrainian authorities have increasingly been speculating obsessively about an alleged impending “Russian invasion” of Ukraine. No proof whatsoever is being provided – only unsubstantiated conjectures that are bandied about with enviable persistence.

Against this backdrop, there is less and less mention of the Minsk agreements as such at the OSCE. Some prefer not to recall at all that the key document for settling the crisis in Ukraine – the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015 – was endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202 and became part of international law subject to mandatory implementation.

At the instigation of the United States of America, propaganda hype about this spurious invasion was also unleashed in the United Nations Security Council itself on 31 January. However, even in that forum, the initiators were not discussing the implementation of the Package of Measures in the context of Ukraine – on that they were silent. Nor were they talking about facilitating a settlement. They merely used the convening of that meeting as grounds for yet another anti-Russian show.

The objectives of such a tactic are absolutely clear to us: first and foremost, to justify the Ukrainian authorities sabotaging the implementation of the Minsk agreements; in addition, to provide an information basis for the further military assimilation of that country’s territory by NATO and to substantiate the continuation of illegitimate unilateral actions in the international economy; and finally, to make the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 2202 a bargaining chip in the dialogue on other, larger international political issues. Interestingly, it is the countries of the NATO politico-military alliance that are in fact also permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, where the Minsk Package of Measures was unanimously endorsed on 17 February 2015, that are involved in all this.

The scenario of a deliberate escalation of tensions in eastern Ukraine also includes intensified deliveries of foreign weapons and military equipment to the Ukrainian Government, something that is not consistent with paragraph 10 of the Package of Measures. Further aircraft arrived from the United States and the United Kingdom this past week. For example, according to the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, some 500 tonnes of US-manufactured lethal weapons and ammunition alone have been shipped recently. In that context, the wise saying by the famous Russian writer Anton Chekhov 130 years ago comes to mind: “One must never place a loaded rifle on the stage if it isn’t going to go off.” My esteemed partners, who are you planning on shooting at and where? At the civilians of Donbas? Speaking of which, ammunition of the calibre employed in NATO countries is already being used to shell Donbas. Infrastructure facilities, among other things, are under threat. For example, on 29 January, the Donetsk authorities recorded the use of 60 mm mortar shells against the electrical substation in Olenivka.

The US and UK Governments have not only sent thousands of different missile systems and grenade launchers to Ukraine, but have also organized training courses for Ukrainian military personnel on their use in urban areas. Earlier, during joint exercises with NATO, the Ukrainian armed forces had practised offensive operations on the same terrain.

Representatives of NATO countries have recently been arguing that the Alliance is allegedly “exclusively defensive” in nature. We shall not recall now the actions of NATO countries in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya and other States, which were carried out in circumvention of international law and claimed many civilian lives. Let us merely recall that the argument about the “defensive” motives of NATO activities, including in relation to Ukraine, is refuted by the provisions of the memorandum of understanding signed back in 2004 between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. It clearly states that the format of Ukraine’s co-operation with NATO includes support not only for the Alliance’s tactical and training objectives, but also for strategic ones, including “offensive operations”.

It might also be recalled here that Ukraine’s doctrinal documents, adopted under the superintendence of its foreign handlers, allow for the possibility of using military force against the territory of a neighbouring State, or the fact that the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, recently decided to increase the Ukrainian armed forces by another 100,000 personnel in the foreseeable future. All this does not at all add to the security of the pan-European space.

We regret that Poland, which has only just embarked on its Chairmanship of the OSCE, recently joined in “pumping” Ukraine full of lethal weapons. A military transport aircraft loaded with the first cargo arrived from Warsaw on 30 January. The decision to supply Piorun (Thunderbolt) man-portable air defence systems has been approved. Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki even mentioned the possibility of supplying unmanned aerial vehicles, failing to mention that their use has been prohibited under paragraph 7 of the Minsk Memorandum and by the ceasefire-strengthening measures of 22 July 2020. Are such actions consistent with the role assigned to the OSCE Chairmanship? To say nothing of the commitments undertaken within the framework of our Organization to refrain from deliveries of lethal weapons to crisis regions.

Information has already become public about the forthcoming visit by the Chairperson-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland Zbigniew Rau, to Ukraine, which is expected to begin on 9 February. He also intends to travel to Donbas, albeit only to the part controlled by the Ukrainian Government, without visiting Donetsk and Luhansk. As we see it, providing military and political support to one of the parties to the conflict and ignoring the representatives of Donbas is not the best start as an “honest broker” seeking to facilitate a settlement. We urge our Polish colleagues to think seriously about this.

Incidentally, we are witnessing another wave of “political tourism” to Ukraine. Against the backdrop of a deep domestic political crisis in his own country, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson did not let this opportunity slip through his fingers. The aforementioned Polish Prime Minister, Mr. Morawiecki, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have also visited Kyiv. The Foreign Ministers of Germany, France, Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are planning to visit the Ukrainian capital this week or next.

We wonder whether there will be any reaction on their part to the position recently voiced by the Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, Oleksii Danilov, to the effect that the authorities in Kyiv have no intention of implementing the Minsk agreements at all. On 31 January, in an interview with Associated Press, he said that the “fulfilment of the Minsk agreements would mean the country’s destruction” and that at the time they were signed “it was already clear for all rational people that it’s impossible to implement those documents”. Furthermore, the Ukrainian official took it upon himself to warn the West against pressuring the Ukrainian Government into fulfilling the Minsk deal because, in his opinion, this “would be dangerous for the country” and could “lead to a very difficult internal situation”.

On 1 February, President Zelenskyy reinforced this point, saying that he was “not satisfied with all the clauses of the Minsk agreements”. He immediately clarified: “We are big boys and must do something that can de-occupy our territories, in particular protect our State in one form or another.” On the same day, in an interview with the Polish newspaper *Rzeczpospolita*, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, speaking about Donbas, stated that the region would not receive “any special status”.

It seems that the “big boys”, and Zelenskyy considers himself to be among them, should take a more responsible approach to implementing United Nations Security Council resolution 2202 and fulfilling as soon as possible the Minsk Package of Measures aimed at restoring Ukraine’s territorial integrity on the basis of direct dialogue with the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk in the interests of lasting and sustainable peace.

So, we ask again: will there be any public assessment, not least on the part of the OSCE Chairmanship, of the statements about the *de facto* withdrawal from the Minsk process made by the Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council headed by President Zelenskyy? It is noteworthy that these statements were made only a few days after the 26 January meeting of the foreign policy advisers to the Normandy Four leaders in Paris – there the Ukrainian representative instead declared his commitment to the Minsk agreements.

The dichotomy in the approach of the Ukrainian authorities, whose representatives simultaneously talk about the need to clear the way for diplomacy and in the same breath reject the Minsk agreements and justify a solution to the so-called “Donbas problem” by force, is quite revealing. Some would say that this is a “disease of inexperience” among fledgling politicians, the problems of a “young democracy”, the lack of a vertical power structure and so forth.

The reality reveals something quite different: the statements they made about commitment to the Minsk agreements are just a smokescreen. The current Ukrainian authorities, who came to power on a wave of public desire for peace and dialogue with Donbas, continue instead to bank on a military solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Under pressure from militant nationalists and at the instigation of their foreign handlers, they are shying away from a political settlement on the basis of the Minsk agreements signed seven years ago. One thing is clear: the only alternative to the Minsk agreements is to start a new cycle of fratricidal war in eastern Ukraine. And this appears to be exactly what the Ukrainian Government is aiming at, as evidenced by the signs of preparations for armed provocations in Donbas.

It is noteworthy, incidentally, that in this context the Ukrainian Government sees no threat of an “invasion” from the territory of neighbouring States today. What is at issue here is an information campaign being whipped up primarily by the United States and the United Kingdom. In that connection, President Zelenskyy’s comments on 28 January are telling. He noted that Western leaders and media are deliberately stirring up panic, which is destabilizing Ukraine. He added that because of such talk, at least 12.5 billion dollars (over 6 per cent of the country’s nominal gross domestic product) had been withdrawn from Ukraine in recent weeks, and now the country needed some 4 to 5 billion dollars to stabilize its economy urgently. Zelenskyy also said that in constantly supporting and highlighting this issue the White House was making a mistake. It is noteworthy, incidentally, that the US Government immediately rushed to publicly disagree with the Ukrainian President – it is obvious that they clearly do not want to give up using the Ukrainian issue as a tool for fanning anti-Russian hysteria.

Under these circumstances, we continue calling upon the Kyiv regime’s foreign handlers to stop the destabilizing militarization of Ukraine and hyping up the prospect of a war. All possible assistance should be given to a political and diplomatic way out of the crisis in that country. Lasting and sustainable peace is possible only on the basis of comprehensive implementation in good faith by the parties to the conflict – the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk – of all the provisions of the Package of Measures in their entirety, in the correct sequence and in a co-ordinated manner.

Thank you for your attention.