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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1139th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 March 2017

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation at the line of contact in Donbas remains tense. Periods of relative calm alternate with outbursts of violence provoked by the Ukrainian armed forces.

The latest meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group took place in Minsk on 29 March. Agreements were reached on a ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons beginning on 1 April. Updated lists of military equipment indicating their current location and future storage sites are expected from the parties already on 31 March. We shall expect the Ukrainian armed forces to withdraw their troops from the Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement area on 6 April.

Meanwhile, as a result of the Ukrainian armed forces' shelling, the Donetsk filtration plant is once again without power and two villages in the south of the Donetsk region have been left without electricity. The Petrovsky district of Donetsk has been shelled, a civilian injured, and ten houses and a school damaged.

The monitors of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) confirmed that the marked aggravation of the situation on the southern flank on 20 March began with firing from multiple-launch rocket systems on the outskirts of security force-controlled Lebedynske in a north-easterly direction, in other words against militia-controlled territory. Prior to the start of large-scale skirmishes in the Svitlodarsk-Debaltseve area on 22 March, an SMM unmanned aerial vehicle recorded empty boxes of shells and traces of a large number of howitzers in Svitlodarsk.

Over the past week, the SMM confirmed that civilians had been injured in Donetsk, Horlivka, Kruta Balka, Lozove and Naberezhne, a kindergarten in Komunarivka had been hit by a shell, and houses and outbuildings had been damaged in Horlivka, Donetsk, Dokuchaievsk, Donetskyi, Zaichenko and Molodizhne. Artillery strikes were recorded

against the Donetsk filtration plant and a water pumping facility in Znamianka, along with the shelling of Kruta Hora, Luhansk, Raivka and Syhnalne.

The Ukrainian Government is building up its military presence in the security zone. During the week of 20 to 26 March, in violation of the Package of Measures and the Addendum to it, the SMM monitors discovered 32 per cent more weapons belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces than in the previous week. No less than 100 armoured personnel carriers belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces are massed close to the line of contact. Over 200 units of military equipment are missing from the depots.

As a result of the indiscriminate use of weapons by the Ukrainian security forces, the number of civilian victims is growing, as is the scale of the destruction of civilian infrastructure facilities.

The Ukrainian Government's tactic aimed at the socio-economic strangulation of the refractory population is well known after almost three years of conflict. We recall the blocking off of the North Crimean Canal, the blowing up of power lines in the Kherson region, the blocking of deliveries of food and other important goods for the population, the termination of social payments, including pensions, to citizens of Ukraine, and the establishment of a *de facto* border regime at the line of contact in Donbas, meaning that people have to queue for hours at one of the few entry-exit points.

Finally, the trade and transport blockade of Donbas has severed the established economic ties between enterprises, jeopardizing many jobs and the well-being of many families who already have a difficult life. The government has in fact supported and even led the blockade policy, and the United States of America and European countries take an indulgent view of this. At any rate, we have not heard any words of condemnation here so far.

All of these actions by the Ukrainian authorities have not been dictated by necessity but merely by a desire to take vengeance on the inhabitants of Donbas, even if the authorities damage themselves in doing so. The severing of economic ties has affected businesses on both sides of the line of contact. You can choose to believe this or not, but it is true.

The actions of the authorities in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions to ensure the socio-economic survival and development of the region are understandable, logical and natural. A promising programme of humanitarian aid and environmental safety for the population living in the government-controlled regions of Donbas has been launched.

Against the background of the war waged by the Ukrainian Government against its own citizens living in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the situation is also deteriorating in the rest of Ukraine.

Nationalists and radicals have become more active. With the connivance of the Ukrainian Government and the law enforcement agencies, attacks have been organized on branches of banks with Russian capital in Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhia, and last week, offices of Russia's Sberbank were damaged in Lviv and Kramatorsk. Criminal excesses are becoming established in Ukraine. The desecration of memorials and attacks on diplomatic representations go unpunished.

No good will come of conniving with nationalists. The government's campaign to impose an image of an external enemy, demonize the Soviet past and oppress the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine is extremely dangerous. De-Russification has been elevated to the level of State policy, as was confirmed by the representatives of the Ukrainian presidential administration who visited Vienna last week. The use of the Russian language in Ukraine is disappearing from the legal framework. The draft law on language quotas being considered by the Verkhovna Rada provides for a reduction in broadcasting in Russian and the languages of national minorities on Ukrainian television to 25 per cent, which restricts the rights of the Russian-speaking population and directly contravenes Article 10 of the Ukrainian Constitution.

Generally speaking, the internal political situation in the country is "becoming heated", and this may carry the risk of fresh escalation in Donbas.

Mr. Chairperson,

We very much hope that, in spite of these alarming signals, the policymakers in Kyiv will stand up to the "war party" and will use the chance to take a real step towards ending the violence in Donbas. It would be sufficient to implement the agreements reached yesterday in the Trilateral Contact Group. The only way now for the Ukrainian Government to try to return Donbas to Ukraine is to implement the Minsk agreements in full. In this regard, there is no alternative to a political and diplomatic solution to the Ukrainian and pan-European problem.

Thank you for your attention.