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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1159th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 October 2017

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

Mr. Chairperson,

Stabilizing Ukraine is in the interests of all the countries of the European continent. The Minsk Package of Measures was agreed upon by the Ukrainian parties to the conflict, approved by the leaders of the Normandy format countries and, ultimately, endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202. It is the only real framework for a settlement that would preserve the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its current borders. It provides for a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict through the formalization of the special status of Donbas on a permanent basis and the incorporation of this provision into the Ukrainian Constitution. We urge our colleagues to carefully familiarize themselves once again with the text of the Package of Measures so as not to forget what the special status of Donbas involves. We are forced to repeat all this, since the Ukrainian Government continues to take unilateral steps undermining the basis of the Minsk agreements.

The enactment of the Law on the Special Status of Donbas back in 2014 would have resulted in a swift settlement of the conflict. However, this did not happen after the signing of the Package of Measures or after the agreement of the Steinmeier formula within the Normandy format in October 2015. The replacement of that law with a document contravening the Package of Measures will only pave the way for an escalation of the situation rather than promoting a settlement. We will carefully study the draft laws on Donbas submitted to the Ukrainian Parliament to see whether they are in conformity with the Minsk agreements.

The latest in the long list of destructive unilateral steps by the Ukrainian Government is the adoption of the fundamentally flawed Law on Education, which infringes upon the rights of the inhabitants of Ukraine to receive an education in their mother tongue. This latest attempt at ethnocide in such a multinational country will only exacerbate the already tense situation. The Law on Education also directly violates the Minsk agreements, which provide for the right to linguistic self-determination in Donbas.

We see no positive steps on the part of the Ukrainian Government that would at least indicate its intention of moving towards a settlement on the basis of the Minsk agreements. We see only a desire to subjugate Donbas by force, blackmail and intimidation, regardless of the rights of the population living there. We remember the slogan of the Ukrainian nationalists “Crimea will be Ukrainian or depopulated”. They would have liked a similar fate for Donbas.

The Ukrainian security forces continue to violate the agreed truce. Over the past week, the Ukrainian armed forces shelled towns and villages in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions on six occasions. Three houses and a hotel were damaged in Dokuchaievsk on 26 September; a female civilian was injured in Vasylivka on 27 September; five houses and a gas pipeline were damaged in Dokuchaievsk, and one house was hit in the Trudivski area of the Petrovsky district of Donetsk on 28 September; two houses and a hotel were damaged in Yasynuvata on 29 September; and a guard was injured and a building damaged at the Trudivski mine on 30 September. The Ukrainian military have admitted that they shot a man as he was crossing a bridge near Shchastia on 6 September. The Ukrainian armed forces are massing military equipment covered by the Package of Measures near the line of contact. This week, monitors from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) recorded 39 howitzers in Oleksandropil, 12 anti-tank guns in Sievierodonetsk, four multiple-launch rocket systems in Khibodariivka and four anti-tank missile systems in Muratove. Over 90 units of previously withdrawn military equipment were missing from their depots.

On 30 September, the full ceasefire regime that had held for five whole weeks in the Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement area was violated by the Ukrainian security forces. At 4.02 a.m., the SMM camera recorded two projectiles from a BMP-1 armoured infantry fighting vehicle in flight from north-north-west to south-south-east, in other words from the direction where the Ukrainian armed forces are deployed.

The disengagement of the parties’ forces and hardware at the line of contact is essential for ensuring a lasting ceasefire. However, in Kyiv and several other capital cities, they clearly want something else: the continuation of hostilities and daily reports about casualties and destruction. Only in this way is it possible to continue intimidating the people of Ukraine and other countries with idle tales about “Russian aggression”, which distract from the real problems.

Let me remind those who have forgotten that in winter 2014, Ukrainian nationalists seized weapons arsenals and government buildings in the west of the country. Molotov cocktails were thrown at law enforcement officers in Kyiv and snipers fired at the police and demonstrators from the buildings occupied by the radicals. The police, bound by orders not to use force and by the demands of some Western leaders, were extremely restrained. I also recall the tragedy in Odessa when nationalists killed and burned alive dozens, if not hundreds of people – there are still no accurate figures available.

The conflict began precisely with the excesses of the nationalists encouraged from outside the country, with a coup d’état in Kyiv and with a desire to punish rather than negotiate with the dissenters.

We can see the fruits of the nationalists’ aspirations for European integration. A crackdown on language and culture began immediately – ranging from laws on language and

education, the destruction of history, and the glorification of Nazis and their collaborators to attacks on the Russian embassy and consulates and attempts to close down the Russian Cultural Centre.

The authorities in Kyiv are trying to sever family, economic and cultural ties with Russia – from banning direct flights and tightening the border crossing regime to imposing trade restrictions, carrying out arson attacks on branches of Russian banks and recklessly refusing to pay off debts.

The lawlessness that began in 2014 shows no sign of stopping – the investigations into the “Maidan snipers” and the Odessa tragedy have been sabotaged, and the guilty parties have not been brought to justice. There are hundreds of political prisoners in Ukraine. The most recent case is the arrest of Yevgeniy Mefedov and Serhiy Dolzhenkov, who have already spent around three years in detention on charges that later collapsed. They were accused of organizing riots in Odessa.

The harassment of dissenters has become routine in Ukraine and extends to the press. Undesirable media are banned, including the Russian television channel “Hunter and Fisherman”. Journalists are under pressure. We remember Ruslan Kotsaba, the Inter television channel and the editor-in-chief of Strana.ua Igor Guzhva. Journalists Dmitry Vasilets and Yevgeniy Timonin have been sentenced to nine years in prison. Vyacheslav Nemyshev, a Russian journalist working for the NTV television channel, was detained yesterday and deported from Ukraine this morning. According to the Ukrainian publication *Korrespondent*, there were 11 attacks on journalists recorded during September alone. The Ukrainian Union of Journalists recorded 75 cases of physical violence against journalists in 2017 committed by representatives of the authorities – law enforcement officers, members of parliament and civil servants. Nor can we forget the murdered journalists – Andrea Rocchelli, Igor Kornelyuk and Anton Voloshin, Anatoly Klyan, Sergey Dolgov, Andrey Stenin, Oles Buzina and Pavel Sheremet. This list goes on.

Yesterday’s meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk showed the confrontational attitude of the Ukrainian authorities and their unwillingness to engage in constructive direct dialogue with Donbas. We recall that the granting of special status to Donbas on a permanent basis is an indispensable condition of the political settlement in Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention.