

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
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**Ensuring security and stability in the OSCE region in light of
developments with respect to Ukraine**

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished colleagues,

The crisis in European security, which has recently taken on a threatening form, has its roots in events going further back than the unconstitutional *coup d'état* in Ukraine in February 2014. Moreover, it is even less about an “aggression” of some kind, a word that the Ukrainian representatives endlessly repeat but which in reality they use to conceal their own internal problems, in particular their efforts at integration within Europe. The roots of the problem lie in the absence of respect for the fundamental principles of international law by a group of States led by the United States of America, which consider that the rules apply to others but not to themselves.

History has shown that belief in one’s own achievements often results in a sense of reality being replaced by a feeling of impunity. Back in the early 1990s, those who today speak of a violation of the OSCE principles were guided not by the rule of law but by the law of might. We also saw threats and the use of force itself against sovereign States without the agreement of the United Nations Security Council. NATO bombed Yugoslavia for 78 days in order to detach Kosovo. Over 2,000 people were killed. This was done without a referendum of any kind and at great human cost. This precedent clearly showed that for our Western partners international law is valued only when it coincides with their interests.

The same attitude has been demonstrated in relation to the events in Ukraine. A group of countries offered political, financial and organizational support to the most radical opposition forces there. This is a matter of direct intervention in the internal affairs of a State, a violation of the sixth principle of the Helsinki Decalogue. It would not be a bad idea to recall how events developed in February 2014.

As a result of the critical political crisis, which was fuelled from abroad, the clashes in Kyiv and other regions of Ukraine became violent. To stabilize the situation, the President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich signed an agreement with opposition representatives, which is

known as the agreement of 21 February. To give it greater weight, it was endorsed on behalf of the European Union by Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, Radosław Sikorski, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, and Eric Fournier, head of the Continental Europe Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the French Republic.

The agreement called for the adoption of a special law within 48 hours of its signing to restore the 2004 Ukrainian Constitution and for the creation of a coalition and formation of a national unity government ten days thereafter. It looked as if a political settlement had been achieved.

The very next day, the President in office was threatened with seizure by insurrectionists and forced to flee Kyiv and then the country. The agreements supported by the countries of Europe were trampled on and forgotten even before the ink on them was dry. It was tantamount to a *coup d'état*.

It is hard to imagine that our Western partners would react without a murmur if foreign representatives were to act like this in their own capitals.

Every time the situation in Ukraine is talked about, the European Union repeats to us the formula “recognize by acts these fundamental principles that it [Russia] has itself invoked many times”. There is a phrase missing here. Russia did reply, but “to no avail”. We actually appealed many times to the principles of non-intervention in internal affairs, non-use of force and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty. But to no avail. Our appeals did not prevent the bombardment of Belgrade. They did not prevent the invasion of Iraq under the false pretext of the existence there of weapons of mass destruction. We will have to deal with the consequences of that invasion for a long time yet. Our appeals to respect the right of peoples to independent political development did not prevent our partners from supporting “colour revolutions” in a number of our close neighbours. Warnings to the victorious revolutionaries to refrain from attempting to resolve territorial issues by force were ignored. The abuse of our trust when agreeing on the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Libya ended in chaos, which still continues today.

The situation with arms control has been no better. The opportunity to adapt the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe to modern-day realities with account of the expansion of NATO to the east was simply ignored by our partners. The fundamentals of strategic stability are constantly being put to the test. The deployment of a missile defence system in Europe, in spite of our repeated warnings and initiatives to develop it together, struck a powerful blow to our relations with the countries of the West.

These and many other steps led to the erosion of trust that has already been spoken about today. When we speak openly about this, some Western colleagues smile or express indignation, attempting in this way to defend their world view, in which they are somehow always right and someone else is always to blame. As long as these smiles do not give way to a recognition of their own mistakes, it will be impossible to restore trust.

We can see some signs, albeit very faint for now, of a more sober attitude. Our Western partners took a year to realize that among the so-called Ukrainian volunteer battalions such as Azov, Aidar, Shakhtarsk and Tornado there were neo-Nazis and out-and-out criminals, who have been responsible for many crimes against the civilian

population. The Ukrainian public prosecutor's office recently issued information about these crimes, whose inhumanity equals that of the torture in Abu Ghraib prison or the prisons from the Saakashvili era. These units are made up mainly of those who played a most active role in the riots in the centre of Kyiv and in other cities throughout Ukraine. Instead of dissolving these armed bands, as provided for in the agreement of 21 February 2014, the "government of winners" decided to give them official status and to integrate them in the law enforcement structures and armed forces. This process is still going on. Many of these volunteer units are obeying only those orders that suit them. How can they be expected to implement the Minsk agreements?

We would emphasize that any crisis can be resolved through direct dialogue between the parties. Civil peace in Ukraine can be achieved only through inclusive national dialogue with account taken of the interests of all social groups living in all regions of the country.

I would remind you that in spring last year, the "government of winners" in Kyiv refused to engage in dialogue and preferred to start an armed offensive against those who seek protection from the aforementioned radical elements, who want to maintain the right to use their native language, who want to retain links with Russia and its people, and who want to preserve their history and honour the older generation who defeated Nazism.

It might be useful to recall how in April last year the perplexed inhabitants of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk stopped the Ukrainian army's armoured vehicles with their bare hands and how the first armoured fighting vehicles were handed over to the insurgents by the same members of the Dnipropetrovsk Brigade who refused to fight against their own people.

Distinguished colleagues,

It is possible to go on forever swapping accusations and repeating well-rehearsed hackneyed phrases. It is possible to turn every meeting into a brawl. We do not accept accusations that distort reality from those whose untruthful assertions were a cover for the unleashing of conflicts throughout the world that resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths and chaos, giving rise to new threats to the security of the world as a whole and the OSCE region in particular.

The problem can be resolved only by taking a sober look at what is happening and realizing the need for joint efforts to prevent the further degradation of the system of European and global security.

As far as the Ukrainian crisis is concerned, we all know that the first steps must be the implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February and all of the relevant decisions that will be adopted by the Contract Group.

The Ukrainian crisis has given us a greater appreciation of the role of the OSCE as the only organization in the pan-European space with a really inclusive membership. The Special Monitoring Mission fulfils an important function in helping to stabilize the situation, fostering dialogue between the parties at the local level, and observing the human rights and security situation. Attempts to force the Mission to adopt a unilateral position in favour of the authorities in Kyiv must be stopped.

The work of the Contact Group in dealing with the situation in Ukraine is highly important. At all levels it needs to foster efforts to achieve direct dialogue and co-operation between the representatives of Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk.

We welcome the start of work by the specialist subgroups in Minsk, which must find solutions to the top-priority tasks of peaceful political settlement. It is nevertheless clear that the progress in the implementation of the Minsk agreements has been unsatisfactory to date. We have six months until the end of 2015. Time is running out for the completion of constitutional reform and agreement on the permanent special status of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Russia sincerely and unreservedly supports the whole Minsk Package of Measures. It is completely in line with our view of the way the crisis can be resolved. We are deeply interested in seeing the measures implemented on schedule so that the situation in Ukraine settles down and the country does not degenerate into chaos. We are sure that neither we nor the countries of the European Union need a new source of instability on our doorstep leading to new migratory waves and the spread of arms and extremist ideologies.

We see here a tragic paradox. Kyiv does not want to talk to Donbas or discuss a future together. All aspects of the political process are slowing down. There has been no reaction to the proposed amendments to the legislation regarding special status, and agreement on the modalities for local elections is being drawn out. Anybody is considered suitable for involvement in elaborating the constitutional amendments except representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Why is this happening? Listen to the representatives of Kyiv. They say that Ukraine only needs a Donbas that shares the beliefs of the new authorities. Dissenters must disappear. They have not succeeded in doing this by force. Many people have left, including over a million who have come to Russia, but many have remained. Now a new weapon has appeared, the blockade and daily bombardment of Donetsk, Horlivka and other cities close to the line of contact.

Unfortunately, in Minsk the inadmissibility of a humanitarian blockade of the region was not explicitly spelled out. It was not expected that Kyiv would show such disregard for the fate of its citizens. However, this blockade is effectively the clearest manifestation of separatism. Kyiv must give a clear answer – to itself, to Donbas and to the entire international community – to the question, does it regard the inhabitants of Donbas as citizens of Ukraine. Or are only those who pass the test and demonstrate their allegiance worthy?

We urge our partners to ask themselves seriously how a peaceful settlement can be achieved and Ukraine's territorial integrity preserved as long as the blockade is kept up and terms like "separatists" and "bandits" are used to describe those who have gone to such great pains to agree to negotiate their remaining part of Ukraine.

For our part, we are continuing to provide support to the people of Donbas in the form of humanitarian aid on a scale that no one besides us is doing. We will not see these people die of hunger and disease. Humanitarian aid will continue.

Russia is not only providing aid to Donbas but is also doing everything necessary to ensure implementation of the Minsk agreements, which are designed to bring about a

peaceful settlement of the crisis while safeguarding the rights and interests of all sectors of the population and all regions of Ukraine. Although it was by no means easy, we have prevailed upon Luhansk and Donetsk to reach a settlement that would ensure the integrity of the Ukrainian State. Instead of the idea of division and separatism, these territories have agreed on a special status in a decentralized State.

It is becoming more difficult every day to exert this influence. In many regions the population is being driven to despair. People are dying, getting injured, losing friends and relatives merely because they want to live on their own land. The social infrastructure is disintegrating. It is difficult to dictate to them any action or measures.

Our partners frequently say that Ukraine needs support. We understand them perfectly. Since it became independent, no country has done more to subsidize the Ukrainian economy than Russia. Over a million Ukrainian citizens have arrived in our country since the start of the conflict in Donbas. Several million more work there and regularly send large amounts of money back to their homeland to support millions of families.

We urge our partners to consider what and whom they are supporting. Does their aid go to the Ukrainian people or to those who demand money for arms, who ignore the Minsk agreements, and who are saving their strength for military revenge in Donbas?

The best way of helping the people of Ukraine is to support those who are willing to implement the Minsk agreements and to ensure a complete ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons. Support should be provided to those who understand that there is no alternative to a peaceful settlement through constitutional reform, decentralization, amnesty for all participants in the events in south-eastern Ukraine, an exchange of prisoners, and the economic recovery of Donbas. Moreover, this should not be done in an arbitrary manner but in full compliance with the Package of Measures and in agreement with Donetsk and Luhansk. At the same time it is necessary to put pressure on those who oppose this.

Distinguished colleagues,

The situation with regard to the implementation of the Minsk agreements is a true reflection of the essence of the crisis in European security as a whole. The problem is the same: some Western partners for some reason believe there are different ways of honouring agreements. For some they apply in full and even beyond, but for others indulgence and derogation are permissible: to continue the shelling of cities in Donbas, to concentrate heavy artillery in the security zone, to refuse to engage in dialogue and take decisions, and to act unilaterally, distorting the essence of the agreements. And for those who disobey, there are sanctions in the form of a blockade and wholesale victimization of dissidents within the country.

It is time to realize that if things continue in this way, the clashes in Donbas could take on new proportions going far beyond the confines of this region. This is something that neither Russia and its neighbours nor presumably the European Union wants.

Direct dialogue on the basis of respect for the legitimate interests of all parties is the key to everything – not only in Ukraine but in the entire OSCE area. In recent years we have made numerous proposals for adapting the European security system to the exigencies of the twenty-first century. It is extremely important that everyone understands and abides by the

individual formulations in the same way. But people preferred not to listen to us – just as Kyiv does not want to listen to Donetsk and Luhansk today.

Last year, for example, we proposed the detailed development of the sixth principle of the Helsinki Decalogue on non-intervention in the internal affairs of States, referred to by some international experts as the “incontestability of internal systems”. This would make a very useful start to the process of reforming European security as a common project. We believe that the time for this has arrived.

Thank you for your attention.