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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1164th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

16 November 2017

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

Mr. Chairperson,

Despite great expectations of positive changes, the crisis into which the coup d'état in Kyiv in 2014 propelled Ukraine is far from being resolved. The punitive operation continues against the population of Donbas resolved to defend their values, ideals, life and property.

The initiators of the conflict are well known – their representatives were present on the Maidan in 2013 and 2014. Some made impossible promises from the rostrum, some handed out sandwiches and some persistently urged the country's legitimate leadership not to use force against the protesters, in spite of the fact that the radicals on the Maidan were already armed and using Molotov cocktails. Attempts to offload onto others responsibility for the chaos unleashed are a familiar but futile move.

There is a way out of the crisis, and it is well known. It is the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, including the key aspects of granting special status to Donbas and its enshrinement in the constitution. The groundless rallying cries that the conflict was initiated and is supported and fomented by Russia indicate that the Ukrainian Government is not ready for a settlement.

The Verkhovna Rada is discussing amendments to the draft law on what it calls the reintegration of Donbas. The content of the amendments gives a good idea of the intentions of the current authorities. If all references to the Minsk agreements are removed from the text and replaced by wording about the "aggressor country", there can be no talk of the Ukrainian Government's desire for a peaceful settlement. Last weekend, the head of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, Oleksandr Turchynov – the initiator of the punitive operation in the east of the country – announced that any co-operation with Russia after the adoption of that draft law would be regarded as treason. There are calls for the restriction and even the severing of all ties between the peoples of the two countries. This is the real goal of the current authorities, for which they are prepared to make the Ukrainian population pay any price.

The inhabitants of Ukraine are being deprived of the possibility of receiving anything other than pro-government information. The media landscape has been purged with the aim of reinforcing an atmosphere of intolerance – broadcasting in the Russian language is restricted and the work of Internet resources blocked. Foreign journalists with an alternative point of view are deported from the country. The most recent incident occurred on 7 November, when the Russian journalist Zahar Vinogradov was removed from the Moscow to Odessa train. On 1 November, an activist who had been standing up for human rights and protesting against corruption was beaten up in Kharkiv.

The authorities in Kyiv are forcibly erasing the country's historical past, playing into the hands of radical nationalists. Recently, at the initiative of the Prime Minister of Ukraine, Volodymyr Groysman, the Verkhovna Rada approved amendments to the law on the status of veterans, from which all references to the Great Patriotic War were removed and replaced by the term "Second World War". Veterans of the Great Patriotic War have been placed on the same footing as the participants in the Maidan movement, which is an insult to the memory of those who died defending the motherland and disrespectful to those still alive now and their history.

Radical nationalists and neo-Nazis are actively engaged in propaganda activities not only in Ukraine but also on the territory of neighbouring States, and their actions are being encouraged by the authorities. According to the German magazine *Der Spiegel* of 11 November, Ukrainian nationalists from the Azov volunteer battalion, as it is called, are spreading neo-Nazi and radical ideas among young Europeans and recruiting mercenaries. In July they travelled to a festival in the German town of Themar, where they handed out leaflets to the people gathered there urging them to "save Europe from extinction" and "join the ranks of the best". Several people were recruited. Over the past three years, Azov propagandists have succeeded in increasing the battalion's ranks threefold – from 850 to 2,500 persons.

It is not only Kyiv that is tolerating the radicals. The notorious extremist website Mirotvorets, which became a platform for inciting violence, including against journalists, is now based in the United States of America.

Ukrainian radicals have been involved in murders and looting at the line of contact and in unlawful actions beyond the borders of the conflict zone and are fomenting inter-ethnic discord. On 13 November, under the slogan of "no to Hungarian chauvinism", neo-Nazis from the Svoboda party and supporters of the Sych battalion removed the Hungarian flag from the city council building in Berehove in the Zakarpattia region and tried to set it on fire. The head of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, first deputy head of the State Committee of Ukraine for Television and Radio Broadcasting, Bohdan Chervak, responded to information regarding the ban on a number of Ukrainian figures from entering Poland as follows: "In the past, the Poles repeatedly showed themselves to be chauvinists, and this did nothing to help them. On the contrary, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and subsequently the Ukrainian Insurgent Army brought the Poles to their senses ... There will be no concessions on matters of historical memory, in particular with regard to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army or the Galicia Division. Russia failed miserably in this. The same will happen to Poland."

The release from custody of the Ukrainian border guard, Sergey Kolmogorov, who in September 2014, while on duty, killed a woman at a checkpoint near Mariupol, is a gauge of the Ukrainian Government's inability to convict war criminals.

In line with this policy, the Ukrainian security forces are provoking tension at the line of contact, including on the eve of important international events and meetings of the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk. For example, according to Martin Sajdik, in a single day, on 15 November the number of ceasefire regime violations exceeded 2,000. Last week, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) determined conclusively that a container at the Verkhniokalmiuska filtration station and residential areas in Donetsk had suffered damage as a result of massive artillery shelling from territory controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces. Some 90,000 civilians were threatened by a humanitarian disaster. Shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces continues. This week, houses were damaged in Kominternove and Sakhanka. The security forces are continuing to deploy military equipment in violation of the Package of Measures. Last week, the monitors recorded 20 artillery systems in Oleksandropil and Sievierodonetsk and a surface-to-air missile system in Orlivka.

At the last meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group, the parties once again confirmed their commitment to a truce. We trust that this time the Ukrainian Government will somehow be able to ensure the observance of the ceasefire regime by the divisions under its control and finally publish orders to that end, as the representatives of the Donbas militia did a long time ago.

We also trust that the Ukrainian Government will stop sabotaging the disengagement of forces in Stanytsia Luhanska. On 6 November, an SMM unmanned aerial vehicle spotted Ukrainian armed forces' "trenches in use" there.

In this room we hear attempts to present matters as if the problems with the SMM's monitoring are only in non-government-controlled territory. However, the majority of the restrictions on the freedom of movement of the monitors over the past three months have occurred in territory controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces. This was also confirmed by the SMM Principal Deputy Chief Monitor, Alexander Hug, at the briefing on 13 November. Last week, security forces restricted the SMM's access on 23 occasions under the pretext of the threat of mines. On five occasions, monitors were unable to access military equipment storage sites belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces.

We see the desire to falsify statistics and divide access restrictions into "active" and "passive" ones as an attempt to play into the hands of one of the parties to the conflict, which is a violation of the principle of objectivity and impartiality.

This also applies to the harping on about the issue of access by the monitors to the border. The SMM regularly visits checkpoints controlled by the militia without hindrance, practically on a daily basis. There have been no reports of military equipment being moved across the border, and the situation there is calm. Consequently, there is no point in deploying the monitors there on a permanent basis.

Incidents warranting coverage from the point of view of security, along with human rights violations, relate primarily to the line of contact. In accordance with its mandate, the SMM should provide clear information on the situation there.

We are obliged once more to recall that the Mission mandate includes monitoring and reporting on human rights violations in Ukraine, including the rights of national minorities. This includes restrictions on access to information and education in one's mother tongue, infringement of the rights of national minorities, restriction of freedom of speech, persecution of journalists and the spread of radicalism, extremism and nationalism.

In conclusion, we once again recall that the only path to peace lies in the full implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures. Security issues should be considered in parallel to the questions of a political settlement. We also look forward to progress in the exchange of prisoners and hope that the Ukrainian Government will not create artificial obstacles this time.

Thank you for your attention.