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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1178th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 March 2018

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

Mr. Chairperson,

Starting on 5 March, a new ceasefire took effect in the Ukrainian conflict zone. It was agreed by representatives of Kyiv and of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) reports a sharp drop in shooting in Donbas. We welcome this fact.

To consolidate stabilization in the situation on the line of contact, ceasefire orders must be published, heavy weapons and Ukrainian radical volunteer formations must be withdrawn from the line of contact, and military hardware must be returned to its permanent storage depots. The practice of having the sides investigate cases reported by the SMM of populated areas coming under fire, and bringing those responsible to account, could be an important step in this context.

We had great hopes to see the disengagement of forces and hardware at Stanytsia Luhanska, which would have made it possible to agree on new security areas along parts of the line of contact where they are most needed. The localized ceasefire on this stretch has held for nine weeks, starting from 26 December 2017. We call on the SMM to analyse the data from the cameras and give us clear information on who started shooting in this locality on 3 March.

Only over the week before the “spring ceasefire” took effect, the SMM registered six cases of militia-controlled populated areas coming under fire from positions where the Ukrainian armed forces are deployed. On the night of 24–25 February, the electrical substation at Mykhailivka, where a large quantity of mercury is stored, came under fire. An oil tank was damaged and began to leak. This creates the risk of an environmental disaster with irreversible consequences. Other instances of shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces damaged houses in Dokuchaievsk, Kominternove and Slovianoserbsk. Zaitseve and Molodizhne came under artillery fire.

Over the last month, the Ukrainian security forces have intensively been massing weapons along the line of contact in violation of the Minsk agreements. The SMM monitors have spotted the presence of Ukrainian military aircraft on the front line. On 6 March, a Mi-8 helicopter flew in the vicinity of the Marinka checkpoint. This is a flagrant violation of paragraph 7 of the Minsk Memorandum of 19 September 2014, and a dangerous signal that the Ukrainian Government is preparing for a large-scale offensive operation.

In this situation, the SMM must make maximum effort to monitor the line of contact and ensure 24/7 monitoring of the “hot spots”. The SMM must have unhindered freedom of movement along the line of contact, without “mine hazards” being used as a pretext. The monitors have a restraining effect on the sides. If shelling resumes, this should be promptly reported and attempts should be made to identify who was responsible. The SMM’s technical equipment, above all its unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), should patrol the line of contact intensively. We hope to see the patrol base in Popasna resume work as soon as possible.

We condemn all cases of threats against the SMM monitors, including the incident on 5 March at Kozatske, when a gun was aimed at them.

Mr. Chairperson,

We need to reverse the dangerous trend of increasing militaristic rhetoric and confrontational action. We call on our colleagues to realize the seriousness of this situation and send the Ukrainian Government a clear signal that military adventures in Donbas are unacceptable.

Recently, apart from massing forces and carrying out indiscriminate shelling, the authorities in Kyiv have undertaken a number of other dangerous actions.

The law on the so-called “reintegration” of Donbas has come into force. This law aims to destroy the Minsk agreements. It is being used as the basis for preparing a new military operation – a so-called “joint operation”. New deliveries of foreign arms to Ukraine are expected, and the number of foreign mercenaries and instructors is growing.

On 4 March, a US Air Force RQ-4B UAV made another ten-hour reconnaissance flight, including along the line of contact, in gross violation of paragraph 7 of the Minsk Memorandum of 19 September 2014.

Recent statements by United States representatives on the need to liquidate the structures of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions stoke the militarist mood among the Ukrainian leadership and overturn prospects for a negotiation process within the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG).

On 28 February, the Ukrainian Constitutional Court repealed the law on the basic principles of State linguistic policy. This was attempted earlier, on 23 February 2014, in the immediate aftermath of the coup d’état in Kyiv. Back then, it already laid bare the real motives for the radicals’ seizure of power and it fuelled yet further the flames of Ukraine’s internal divisions. Oleksandr Turchynov, who ended up in the Ukrainian President’s chair at that moment, took fright and backed down from signing a decision repealing the law, preferring to lead a gradual attack on the Russian language.

In autumn 2016, the Verkhovna Rada passed the law on introducing linguistic quotas for radio broadcasting. In May 2017, it adopted the law on linguistic quotas for television. Since autumn 2017, there is practically no television or radio broadcasting in Russian or the languages of national minorities. In September 2017, Ukraine adopted the new law on education, which restricts the rights of the non-Ukrainian-speaking population to receive education in their native language.

This has direct consequences for the humanitarian situation in Donbas. The Donetsk administration reports that the authorities in Kyiv refuse to accept requests for infrastructure repair work in Russian.

We have spoken before about the spread of Ukrainian nationalism. The work of the Nazis' accomplices and executioners from the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army lives on in the acts of their successors. Radicals are attacking foreign property with increasing frequency. On 26 February, there was a new attack against the Russian Consulate General in Odessa. On 27 February, there was an arson attack against the Hungarian Cultural Centre in Uzhgorod. This is not an isolated case. On 3 March, nationalists held a march under the slogan "the city of Lviv is not for Poles." Ukrainian radicals continue to put pressure on the authorities. On 27 February, they clashed with police in an attempt to influence the court's decision in the case of the mayor of Odessa. On 8 March, in Uzhgorod and Kyiv, radicals attacked participants in marches for the protection of women's rights. People were injured. We call on the SMM to follow the investigations into these incidents. We reiterate the long overdue need for a comprehensive report on the spread of nationalism in Ukraine.

We do not agree with the statements made by Kurt Volker, the US Special Representative for Ukraine, on 7 March in Warsaw, in which he tried to justify the nationalists by saying that "Ukraine is in the process of strengthening its national identity and needs our respect and understanding." Aggressive nationalism is not the way to strengthen one's identity and distinctness.

We recall the words of the Ukrainian representative at the OSCE in February 2014 and at the last meeting of the Permanent Council on exercising the right of "peaceful protest". The dispersal of the tent camp outside the Verkhovna Rada on 3 March showed that the Ukrainian authorities take a selective approach to deciding whether or not a protest is peaceful. Our Western colleagues have displayed similar hypocrisy.

We recall that the most active "peaceful protesters" at the Maidan in 2014 joined the punitive battalions and have sullied themselves with murders, torture, robbery and looting. Ukrainian radicals and dishonest Ukrainian armed forces personnel are actively robbing the homes of residents of Katerynivka and Novooleksandrivka, which were recently taken by the Ukrainian Government forces. The police are taking no action, despite numerous appeals from the local people.

In conclusion, we recall again that the only hope for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine and preserving the country's territorial integrity is a comprehensive political settlement in accordance with the Minsk Package of Measures. Attempts to follow any other course risk deepening the crisis.