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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1236th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 July 2019

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

Mr. Chairperson,

While Ukraine's political elite is occupied with preparations for the early parliamentary election, shooting continues in the south-east of the country. According to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), the number of civilians affected by the hostilities in Donbas since the start of the year is approaching 80. Ten of these people lost their lives.

The intensity of the skirmishes shows no sign of diminishing. The Ukrainian Government's military operation in Donbas is resulting in fresh destruction. The majority of the dire consequences of Ukrainian shelling are recorded in certain areas of the Donetsk region. An outrageous incident occurred on 11 July in the village of Lukove, where a functioning primary school was shelled using 152 mm and 122 mm heavy artillery guns. An analysis of the SMM data on the direction of fire shows that the shooting came from Ukrainian armed forces' positions. We expect the SMM to carefully catalogue all the data collected by the Mission on the casualties of shelling and the destruction of civilian infrastructure facilities. They need to be published as soon as possible in a corresponding thematic report. Such a report would help to curb the violence. Delaying its publication merely fosters a sense of impunity among those who continue to shell civilian areas.

The meeting of foreign policy advisers to the Normandy Quartet Heads of State, which took place in Paris on 12 July, has galvanized the work of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG). We welcome the agreement on the so-called bread truce from 00.01 hours on 21 July. We trust that it will be observed. For the ceasefire regime to be sustainable, there needs to be practical implementation of the additional measures agreed upon in the TCG on 17 July in support of the ceasefire, including the promulgation of the orders for a ceasefire and disciplinary proceedings for those who violate them, the prohibition of the deployment of weapons in residential areas and near civilian infrastructure facilities, and the prohibition of sabotage activities and the use of snipers.

The example of Stanytsia Luhanska has clearly demonstrated that results can be achieved, if there is the will to do so. After almost three years of sabotage, Ukraine began to fulfil its disengagement commitments, which has helped to reduce tensions. We urge the SMM to continue closely monitoring compliance there with the terms of disengagement provided for in the relevant TCG Framework Decision of

21 September 2016 on Disengagement of Forces and Hardware, and also with the agreements reached in the TCG. It is important that progress has finally been made in the TCG on a plan for the repair and maintenance of the bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska. We expect the representatives of the Ukrainian Government and the authorities of Donetsk and Luhansk to reach an agreement on other aspects of returning this territory to normal life. The disengagement disrupted by the Ukrainian side in Petrivske and Zolote should also be completed without delay. This will provide an opportunity to begin agreeing on new disengagement areas.

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation in the rest of Ukraine is worrying. Having lost the presidential election, the previous Ukrainian leadership laid a series of “delayed-action mines”, splitting Ukrainian society and leading to even greater social and political instability.

For example, the Act on Ensuring the Functioning of Ukrainian as the State Language entered into force on 16 July. I would remind you that it was adopted with the support of the then President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko. It is quite obvious that this discriminatory law is certainly not aimed at the protection and development of the Ukrainian language, but at the restriction of the use of Russian as well as of the languages of national minorities. At the meeting of the United Nations Security Council on 16 July, which was convened on Russia’s initiative, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Lamberto Zannier, also expressed his concern at the lack of mechanisms for protecting the linguistic rights of national minorities following the adoption of that law.

The norms contained in the law and the repressive instruments provided for in it are not in line with Ukraine’s commitments under international law or its domestic legislation, including the Constitution. Furthermore, they contravene the letter and the spirit of Point 11 of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, which merely makes a settlement of the crisis in south-eastern Ukraine an even more distant prospect. Nevertheless, the application of this law has started. The Ukrainian media have already reported on the distribution of leaflets in schools in Kharkiv – a major and predominantly Russian-speaking city in eastern Ukraine – warning teachers about administrative fines for failing to use the Ukrainian language. In that connection, we expect the SMM to closely monitor the situation regarding the linguistic rights of Russian-speaking Ukrainians and national minorities and the consequences of the implementation of the aforementioned law.

Mr. Chairperson,

Radicals of all shades continue to act without inhibition in Ukraine. In recent weeks, they have again tried to make their presence felt by attacking media outlets that represent alternative viewpoints. For example, on 8 July, nationalists from C14 picketed the office of the Ukrainian television channel NewsOne because of its attempt to organize a TV link-up with Russian civil society representatives. Threatening journalists with physical violence, they attacked a correspondent from the Strana.ua website, who was reporting on these events, outside the entrance to the building. Another attack on the media occurred in Kyiv on 13 July – on this occasion, a grenade launcher was fired at the office of the “112” television station.

All this is in addition to the continuing persecution of journalists for their professional activities. The head of the RIA Novosti Ukraine portal, Kirill Vyshinsky, has been in custody for more than a year without charge. The journalist Vasily Muravitsky has also been under house arrest for more than a year (and this is after a year in a pre-trial detention facility). Repeated calls by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Harlem Désir, and human rights organizations for the investigation into their cases to be accelerated have so far gone unheeded by the Ukrainian Government. The high-profile murders of

Pavel Sheremet, Oles Buzina, who would have celebrated his 50th birthday a few days ago, Igor Kornelyuk, Anton Voloshin, Anatoly Klyan, Kateryna Handziuk and many others remain unsolved. The despicable Mirotvorets website, which servers in the United States of America have been “sheltering”, is continuing its work. Personal details about Ukrainian and foreign media representatives considered undesirable by the radical nationalists are posted on this website. These actions pose a direct threat to the lives and safety of journalists.

The problem of aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism spreading from Ukraine has been threatening pan-European security for a long time. This is quite obvious from the results of an intelligence operation by the Italian police, which recently uncovered a whole arsenal of weapons in Turin belonging to right-wing extremists who had fought in Donbas. The haul included not only firearms and Nazi paraphernalia, but even an air-to-air missile. According to reports from the Italian police and press (for example, *la Repubblica*), it is a case of five criminals who had ties to the Ukrainian neo-Nazi Azov battalion. That battalion participated in the Ukrainian Government’s operation against the population of Donbas.

Mr. Chairperson,

We consider it inadmissible for the Ukrainian Government to selectively interpret its OSCE commitments and for a number of participating States to condone this. A few days ago, the Central Election Commission of Ukraine refused to register 17 observers (Russian citizens) as part of the team of official observers from the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to monitor the election to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated example of the Ukrainian Government’s politicized approaches in violation of existing commitments. The withdrawal by the Ukrainian authorities of the invitation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to monitor this election is also telling in this regard. We have not heard any response from the OSCE in this connection.

Mr. Chairperson,

As is clear from the results of the April presidential election, there has long been a demand in Ukrainian society for qualitative changes in the life of the country and an end to militaristic and confrontational rhetoric. Much will depend on the results of the parliamentary election, which will take place on 21 July. At the same time, the prospects for a settlement of the crisis in Ukraine are linked to the ability and readiness of the country’s new leadership to listen to and hear all its inhabitants. It goes without saying that this includes the people of Donbas, who as a result of the policy of the previous Ukrainian authorities have found themselves cut off from the decision-making processes about the future development of the country. In any event, the past five years have shown that the attempts by the “Maidan authorities” to use force to suppress dissent have failed.

We assume that the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, endorsed by UN Security Council resolution 2202, is the sole framework for a settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis. We trust that the Ukrainian Government is aware of the need to establish substantive direct dialogue with the authorities of Donetsk and Luhansk and to work constructively with their representatives within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk. This position has been clearly confirmed by the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, notably also during a telephone conversation with the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyi, on 11 July.

Thank you for your attention.