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**STATEMENT BY  
MR. ANDREY KELIN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1046th MEETING OF  
THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 March 2015

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

Mr. Chairperson,

Yesterday the latest meeting in the Normandy format was held at the level of deputy ministers for foreign affairs to assess the progress in implementing the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements. It confirmed once again the importance of the full, comprehensive and consistent implementation of the Package.

The February agreements in Minsk, subsequently approved by the United Nations Security Council, remain the basis of the peace process in Ukraine. Unfortunately their implementation leaves something to be desired. Ceasefire violations continue as well as machinations in withdrawing heavy weapons, which we have already spoken about in detail today. Serious questions and concerns are aroused by resolutions of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine that directly contradict the Minsk agreements, as do many statements made by Ukrainian politicians, often the highest-ranking ones.

We should now like to draw attention not so much to details, which are of course important, but to the actual approach of the parties to implementing the Package of Measures. In Minsk, an agreed formula was worked out, consisting of consecutive steps that need to be implemented to bring about the transition first from an armed conflict to a peaceful dialogue and then to a political resolution. This should make it possible to re-establish peace in the lives of the inhabitants of Donbas – to restore electricity, water and heating to homes there, as well as pensions, wages and welfare payments, and to stock the shops' shelves with food and the hospitals and pharmacies with medicines. In Minsk, the outlines of constitutional reform in Ukraine were clearly drawn, taking the special characteristics of Donbas into account. When this is implemented it will be possible to preserve a single State and to provide the inhabitants of all regions of the country with the standard of living they aspire to.

The cornerstone of the Minsk process is a dialogue between Kyiv, on the one hand, and Donetsk and Luhansk on the other. Ideally, this should be direct and straightforward. If other regions are involved, it will remain the same inclusive national dialogue on

constitutional reform as referred to throughout the past year, starting initially with the Geneva declaration.

What our colleagues call a process of national dialogue involving the Office of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator has more to do with promoting the reform agenda imposed on Kyiv by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund. A dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk is not incorporated into that process and it does not mention the authorized representatives of the regions. It is important not to substitute concepts here.

The priority now is to take further steps towards bringing the parties closer together to discuss specific questions and problems within the framework of the Contact Group. Kyiv has no interlocutor aside from the representatives of “certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions”, as they were referred to in Minsk, or the Donetsk People’s Republic and Luhansk People’s Republic, as they call themselves. It was they who signed the agreements in Minsk and they who are responsible for the implementation of these. It makes no sense to ignore this reality. Resolving the issues of the implementation of the Package of Measures through unilateral decisions will not work. This will only bring the situation to an impasse.

In this regard, we believe it is critical to set up without delay the various working groups provided for in point 13 of the Package of Measures. These groups are essential to implementing the whole package of agreements. The launch of their work cannot be made conditional on any additional circumstances.

What we see on the part of Kyiv today tells of a lack of willingness, and even intention to start tackling political, humanitarian and economic issues. It seems this would actually explain Kyiv’s lack of motivation to restrain the “Right Sector” militants in the area of Donetsk airport and near Mariupol. As long as hostilities continue, the political dialogue could be sabotaged.

Another indicator of this is the decision of the Verkhovna Rada to postpone the entry into force of the substantive provisions of the law on interim local self-government in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

We should like to recall that the Package of Measures does not provide for amendments to be made to that law, least of all those that would delay its entry into force indefinitely. It already went through the Verkhovna Rada in autumn 2014. The contracting parties, the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk at least, counted in Minsk on what was “on the table” on 12 February. If the parties had believed that a new or amended law needed to be adopted, then they would probably have included that under point 4 rather than limiting themselves only to “a resolution of the Parliament of Ukraine specifying the area enjoying a special regime”.

The only requirement for elections stipulated by the Package of Agreements is that the modalities should be agreed on by Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk, and that they should be held in accordance with the relevant OSCE standards, with monitoring by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. There are no other conditions.

Kyiv violated a fundamental aspect. These modalities must be discussed and agreed on within the Contact Group. While insisting that the OSCE standards were only tightened up, it did not try to discuss these even with the OSCE in the framework of the Contact Group.

Obviously, the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk can on entirely legitimate grounds, with reference to points 4 and 12 of the Package of Measures, require that this list of conditions be reviewed or expanded.

Kyiv's declaration that "certain regions" of Donbas are "temporarily occupied territories" is legally unfounded and will cause tensions to escalate between the parties. This cannot be regarded as a step in the direction of fostering dialogue and finding a peaceful resolution. By this logic, Kyiv is obliged to conduct a political dialogue with representatives of the "occupied territories". If this, however, signals a refusal to hold a dialogue with them, then it is a flagrantly gross violation of the Package of Measures and the entire logic of the peace process.

In our view, there should be no delays on an amnesty with an exchange of prisoners. We should like to recall once again that Kyiv previously handed people over to the Donbas insurgents who had no connection with the insurgents and who had been arrested "to make up the numbers". There are also many documented cases of the use of torture by Ukrainian Security Service agents and by members of the volunteer battalions.

It will remain necessary to provide humanitarian aid to Donbas by any possible means for as long as the blockade of Donbas continues. The Package of Measures provides for defining the modalities for fully restoring socio-economic relations, including welfare transfers such as the payment of pensions and other payments, and for the governance of a section of its banking system. Kyiv has done nothing and the situation is only getting worse.

The blockade must be removed without delay. Essential commodities, food, drugs and other things are not reaching Donbas. People can cross the demarcation line only in exchange for bribes. In Stanytsia Luhanska, the security forces have blown up the last bridge connecting the area with the rest of Ukraine. Pensioners have to climb up and go down practically on a rope in order to get from one residential area to another.

If Kyiv is slow in taking action to rehabilitate an area destroyed by Ukrainian armed forces fire for political, albeit unfounded, reasons, or because of cynical attempts to economize on resources, there is no justification for this. We state once again that the blockade is cutting Donbas off from Ukraine and it is being turned into a frozen conflict area at the hands of Ukraine.

Mr. Chairperson,

Today there has been no mention of events in other areas of Ukraine, which the Special Monitoring Mission should also observe closely. However, there is clearly a great risk that Kyiv or those who help it may try to stabilize certain processes within Ukraine at the expense of an escalation in tension in Donbas. This paves the way to a disaster. The inhabitants of Donetsk, Luhansk, Horlivka and other Ukrainian towns and villages have suffered enough.

The events in Ukraine are tragic. The Minsk agreements are the result of a delicate compromise reached by both parties. If Kyiv backs out of this compromise then the other party, the insurgents, will have no incentive to make progress in implementing the other points of the Package of Measures. This incidentally also relates to the actions referred to in

the document published on a European Union website (agreed on between Kyiv and Brussels) entitled “EU-Ukraine Association Agenda” , in particular the provisions that constitutional reform must be inclusive.

For its part, Russia will strive for the thorough implementation of the Minsk agreements. We call on those influential partners preparing to visit Kyiv to impress upon the Ukrainian authorities that the commitments, which were also supported by Mr. Petro Poroshenko in his capacity as President of Ukraine, should be implemented.

Thank you for your attention.