

PC.DEL/1041/18

30 August 2018

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1194th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 August 2018

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the “back-to-school ceasefire” that started at 00.01 a.m. on 29 August. The first 24 hours have shown that the situation at the line of contact has stabilized but, according to some reports, shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces has not stopped completely.

Unfortunately, the experience of the previous “truces” negotiated by the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) has demonstrated the Ukrainian Government’s unwillingness to take real de-escalation measures. Ukraine’s confrontational attitude and continuing obstructionist policy when it comes to implementing the Minsk Package of Measures were confirmed at the TCG meeting on 22 August. Under contrived pretexts, the Ukrainian representatives refused to agree to the additional military security measures proposed by the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), Ertuğrul Apakan: the gradual withdrawal of weapons on a sectoral basis, the disengagement of forces, demining activities, the publication of orders for a ceasefire, and the elaboration of a mechanism to punish those guilty of shelling.

The Ukrainian negotiators ruined the opportunity to agree on a disengagement of forces in Stanytsia Luhanska. In its weekly report dated 28 August, the SMM confirmed that the seven-day complete ceasefire necessary for the disengagement of forces in the Stanytsia Luhanska area had been observed many times. The Ukrainian Government ignores the information corroborated by the SMM, including this week, about advances by the Ukrainian armed forces inside the Petrivske and Zolote disengagement areas, which threaten to turn the disengagement areas into hotspots. Ukraine’s efforts to sabotage the implementation of the TCG Framework Decision of 21 September 2016 on the disengagement of forces make it practically impossible to de-escalate tension at the line of contact.

The situation on the ground confirms the Ukrainian Government’s desire for escalation. On 23 August, on the eve of Ukrainian Independence Day, the Ukrainian armed

forces made another attempt to break through the demarcation line near Zholobok. The SMM recorded over 500 artillery shots and a number of fires there. Just before that, the SMM reported a large-scale movement (179 units of equipment) by rail of artillery, tanks and armoured vehicles belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces towards the line of contact. Shelling by the security forces in August resulted in damage to houses in Holmivskiyi, Dokuchaievsk, Dolomitne, Donetsk, Zholobok, Staromykhailivka and Yasynuvata. An ambulance was destroyed in Naberezhne on 7 August when it was hit by an anti-tank guided missile, as was a truck carrying limestone in Dokuchaievsk on 28 August. The driver died.

We have taken note of the SMM's report dated 28 August on civilian casualties in Horlivka and Zaitseve as a result of shelling in May and June. We urge the Mission to react more promptly to reports of shelling. The SMM should include in its reports detailed information about casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure facilities. Monitoring at the line of contact needs to be increased. Patrols, including using unmanned aerial vehicles, should be conducted on both sides of the line of contact on an equal and proportional basis. Distorting or restricting information in favour of one of the parties to the conflict or violating the Mission's mandate is inadmissible.

A sustainable de-escalation in Donbas requires a set of synchronized steps in both the security and the political sphere, as was agreed upon at the highest level. However, Ukraine is not yet ready for this. At the TCG meeting on 22 August, Ukrainian negotiators once again refused to set out on paper the Steinmeier formula approved by the Normandy Quartet summits in 2015 and 2016, referring to the need to receive instructions from the Normandy format. However, the Ukrainian Government torpedoes this issue there too. This is a vicious circle.

The issue of exchanging detained persons based on the principle "all for all" is hanging in the air. The Ukrainian negotiators have not confirmed the information requested by Donetsk and Luhansk on certain prisoners and have not responded to the inquiry about the procedural status of those who are allegedly reluctant to return to Donbas.

There are no conditions in place for an amnesty. The law on the "reintegration of Donbas" closed the door on the opportunity for implementing the relevant provision of the Package of Measures. In an interview with *Ukrayinska Pravda*, Ukraine's Minister of the Interior, Arsen Avakov, confirmed that there would be no amnesty as envisaged in the Package of Measures. Under these circumstances, we once again urge the OSCE to conduct a comparative analysis of the Package of Measures and the Ukrainian law on "reintegration".

President Petro Poroshenko confirmed Ukraine's unwillingness to begin dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk and adopt measures for a political settlement of the internal conflict. The gist of his speech at the celebrations to mark Ukrainian Independence Day was not to search for ways of settling disagreements with Donbas but to appeal to the West to impose new sanctions on Russia.

The Ukrainian leadership's intentions are fostered from abroad. Arms deliveries from the United States of America and Canada could become particularly dangerous. The Ukrainian plant "Impuls" has begun producing US-style high-fragmentation explosive grenades (PGOF-40) for grenade launchers. By the end of 2021, the Ukrainian armed forces will be equipped with Javelin anti-tank missile systems. In 2019, the United States is planning to supply Ukraine with Stinger multiple-launch rocket systems and the necessary

ammunition. Canada issued a permit to PGW Defence Technologies to supply Ukraine with large-calibre sniper rifles. Canadian embassy representatives met with radicals from the Azov battalion. There are photos confirming this on the Azov website.

The Ukrainian Government's position is obstructing the resolution of serious humanitarian problems in Donbas – the issue of pensions for persons with reduced mobility and the repair of the bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska. At the meeting in Minsk on 22 August, representatives of the Ukrainian Government blocked the joint declaration proposed by the co-ordinator, Toni Frisch, on the inadmissibility of using torture against prisoners. They ignored Donetsk's proposals to create a negotiation format for resolving the problem of missing persons. They showed no interest in transferring over 100 prisoners, not involved in the conflict, from Donetsk and Luhansk to serve their sentences in Ukraine.

By continuing to sabotage the Package of Measures and whipping up anti-Russian hysteria, the Ukrainian Government is siding with the radicals. As a result, the number of ethnically motivated hate crimes is growing in Ukraine. Special rapporteurs from the United Nations Human Rights Council on the right to housing and on ethnic minorities condemned the "heinous acts ... of violence against ... the Roma" and noted the growth of hateful rhetoric in Ukraine. Western media confirm the attempts by Ukrainian radicals to promote nationalism abroad. Following *Der Spiegel* and *The Guardian*, Deutsche Welle has published a video clip in which a Ukrainian soldier sent to Germany for medical treatment gave a Nazi salute. The SMM has reported further acts of vandalism against Second World War memorials and attempts by radicals to exert pressure on the courts. We urge the Mission to hurry up with the preparation of a dedicated report on manifestations of nationalism, neo-Nazism and racial intolerance in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian Government continues to cleanse the media space, encourage harassment of journalists and interfere in the affairs of the Church. The editor-in-chief of RIA Novosti Ukraine, Kirill Vyshinsky, remains in detention on trumped-up charges. Threatening to terminate the museum's rental agreement, the authorities forced the abbot of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra (Cave Monastery) to remove a photograph of the Presidents of Russia and Ukraine from the museum's display. We urge the SMM to monitor more closely the situation of the Orthodox Church and report in detail about attacks on churches, harassment of members of the clergy and trampling on the freedom of conscience and religion.

The Ukrainian authorities continue to violate the language rights of ethnic communities. The Ukrainian Government's attempts to conclude separate agreements with individual European Union Member States in circumvention of the law adopted on education further discriminate against the Russian language, which finds itself in a disadvantaged position compared to Ukrainian and EU languages.

Russians present in Ukrainian territory for any reason continue to be hunted down. On 10 August, the Ukrainian Government unlawfully detained the Russian tanker *Mekhanik Pogodin* at the port of Kherson. We demand the immediate release of this Russian vessel. Sailors from the vessel *Nord*, also detained by the Ukrainians, are still unable to return to Russia.

We doubt that the continuing anti-Russian policy will yield any tangible political dividends for the current Ukrainian authorities. The country's population is concerned about completely different problems – economic issues, social vulnerability, the radicals' impunity

and, finally, the armed confrontation with their compatriots in the east of the country. It is clear that the Ukrainian Government is not interested in solving these truly urgent and systemic problems.

Thank you for your attention.