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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1144th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 May 2017

**In response to the report by the Chief Observer of the
OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and
Donetsk, Mr. Flavien Schaller**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Schaller,

We are pleased to welcome you to the OSCE Permanent Council meeting, Mr. Schaller. Thank you for your statement and detailed written contribution to today's discussion.

We take note of the objective weekly updates and spot reports, which are prepared in strict accordance with the mandate. The OSCE Mission describes the actual situation at the Russian checkpoints, noting the lack of any transfers of weapons and military equipment, a regular cross-border flow of civilians and vehicles, the inspection using X-ray machines of cargo trucks coming into Ukraine and going into Russia and the participation of the Ukrainian customs officers and border officials in the inspection of the Russian humanitarian convoys. The observers report that the majority of those who cross through the checkpoint go into Russia for a few hours to obtain groceries and medicine and to use cashpoints. They report on families crossing the border with a significant amount of luggage. Information is provided about Ukrainian buses, which are forced to drive across the border to avoid roadblocks while crossing the line of contact. The people crossing the border have told the observers that in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, there has been increased interest in obtaining documents issued in Donetsk and Luhansk. This all attests to the adverse situation of the peaceful inhabitants of Donbas who have been placed on the brink of a humanitarian disaster by the Ukrainian Government.

Mr. Chairperson,

Concerning the latest moves by our European, United States and Ukrainian colleagues regarding the possibility of expanding the Mission's mandate, I should like to note that the OSCE observers are present at the Gukovo and Donetsk checkpoints on the basis of an invitation extended by the Russian Federation purely as a gesture of goodwill as part of the

implementation of the Berlin Declaration by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Russia, the Federal Republic of Germany, France and Ukraine of 2 July 2014. Russia has no obligation to station observers along the entire border. It is well guarded by the Russian Federal Security Service Border Guards and international surveillance is not required.

The Minsk Package of Measures refers to: “Reinstatement of full control of the State border by the Government of Ukraine throughout the conflict area, starting on day one after the local elections and ending after the comprehensive political settlement (local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions on the basis of the law of Ukraine and constitutional reform)”.

With regard to the operating procedure of the observers at the Gukovo and Donetsk checkpoints, Russia has established all the necessary conditions for the Mission to fully discharge its mandate. The observers’ activities are facilitated on the basis of a Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of 15 October 2014. Meetings are held in Rostov-on-Don between Chief Observer Schaller and a representative of the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and with the relevant officials of Russian bodies; during these, observers have a chance to clarify matters of interest to them regarding the procedure for being present at border crossing points where a special security regime is in operation. As a result of one of these meetings, a decision was made to raise the observers’ awareness by providing them in advance with detailed information from the Russian Ministry for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Disaster Relief about pending Russian humanitarian convoys.

Work is ongoing to grant privileges and immunities to the observers. In view of the OSCE’s lack of international legal personality, this matter will be dealt with using an accreditation procedure for the observers through their respective diplomatic missions in Russia.

In conclusion, we should like once again to thank Mr. Schaller for his work and to reaffirm our willingness to co-operate with the Observer Mission in carrying out its mandate.

Thank you for your attention.