

PC.DEL/172/17  
10 February 2017

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1133rd MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

9 February 2017

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We regard the statements made by the Ukrainian representative as the latest crude attempt to conceal the Ukrainian Government's complete unwillingness to adhere to the Minsk agreements and the subsequent agreements on such issues as the withdrawal of weapons and the disengagement of forces and hardware.

Ukraine's desire to shift the blame for the tragedy in Donbas onto Russia or anyone else for that matter is typical of Kyiv, and this will come as no surprise to anybody. We have absolutely no doubts that it was the Ukrainian security forces' "creeping" offensive that provoked the latest upsurge in violence near Donetsk. This is fully in keeping with the logic of the conflict and the data provided by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM).

The intensity of the clashes in Donbas has diminished recently, but it is not worth getting too excited about this. Yet still we hope that the ceasefire regime will nonetheless hold from now. Unfortunately, towns and villages along the line of contact – Donetsk, Yasynuvata, Spartak, Sakhanka and Kominternove – have still been shelled in the evening and at night.

There have been numerous reports of Ukrainian armed forces shelling towns and villages in Donbas.

Specifically, according to the OSCE monitors, between 1 and 6 February militia-controlled towns and villages were shelled on at least 20 occasions from the directions where Ukrainian security forces are stationed. Two people were killed in Donetsk and more than ten civilians were injured. They included a child and three members of the medical profession who were injured when their ambulance was hit by shell shrapnel. In addition to the casualties among the civilian population, a refugee hostel and an apartment building were destroyed in Donetsk and a school and a shop were damaged. Two civilians were injured in

Kominternove. There was damage to houses and outbuildings in Dokuchaievsk, Telmanove, Makiivka, Molodizhne, Dzerzhynsk, Donetsk, Kalynove, Leninske, Sakhanka, Sokilnyky and Kominternove. A multiple-launch rocket system shell exploded next to the SMM observation post in Yasynuvata. There have been many security force artillery strikes on militia positions, including on the Maiorsk checkpoint on 6 February.

The Ukrainian Government continues to build up its offensive capabilities, regrouping and reinforcing military units, and restocking depots close to the line of contact with ammunition supplies.

Two weeks prior to the events around Avdiivka, from 10 January 16 trainloads of ammunition were brought into the “anti-terrorist operation” zone. What is more, the ammunition was delivered to those units on the front line, and it was not put in storage but spread out directly on the ground. The Ukrainian army group operating in Donbas has also been reinforced. “Fresh” battalions of the National Guard, paratroopers, artilleryists and missileers have been transferred.

More than ten trainloads of ammunition for multiple-launch rocket systems (MLRS) and 152 mm guns have been delivered from the central artillery storage base (at Voznesensk in the Mykolaiv region) to Pokrovsk station. The fact that almost all of the ammunition was sent to front-line units – the 54th and 72nd Mechanized Brigades in the Donetsk area – instead of being put into storage suggests that they do not intend to keep hold of this ammunition for long either.

Between 24 and 27 January, the “anti-terrorist operation” group at the line of disengagement was quickly reinforced. A complete Donbas National Guard Battalion arrived, three battalions of the Azov Regiment were transferred from Urzuf to Donetsk, and a joint detachment from the 79th Air Assault Brigade arrived on 26 January to reinforce the 46th Air Assault Brigade. No less than nine artillery battalions and six MLRS battalions were transferred to the line of contact from the rear.

The fact that 28 pontoons were transferred to the Stanytsia-Luhanska district of the Luhansk region points to the Ukrainian command’s plans to cross the Seversky Donets River and the offensive ambitions of the leadership in Kyiv.

Between 1 and 6 February, the OSCE monitors discovered in the security zone a significant quantity of military equipment belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces, including military helicopters near Dzerzhynsk; 10 MLRS in Aslanove, Volnovakha, Karlivka, Netailove and Sukha Balka; 30 howitzers in Bohoyavlenka, Vidrozhennia, Novoaidar, Pokrovsk, Umanske and near Kalynove; 15 tanks in Avdiivka, Bila Hora and Orlivka; a surface-to-air missile system in Lebedynske. The SMM recorded 33 Ukrainian armoured personnel carriers near the line of contact and 162 pieces of military equipment belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces immediately behind the withdrawal lines.

We expect the SMM to verify this information swiftly and report on the state of affairs. Monitoring needs to be intensified in the security zone so as to help prevent a new spiral of tension in Donbas.

We note the publication of the spot report by the SMM on casualties and damage registered in the Donetsk region on 3 February. Nevertheless, we are awaiting a consolidated

report with photographic material from the SMM on all casualties and damage recorded in Donbas since the very beginning of the conflict.

We welcome the restoration of infrastructure facilities with the assistance of the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC) and the SMM. This has made it possible to prevent a large-scale humanitarian disaster, which would have affected the Donbas population on both sides of the line of contact. It is worth considering the establishment of safe zones around critical civilian infrastructure facilities.

Residential areas and public amenities should not be threatened. The possibility not only of an offensive by the Ukrainian security forces against Donetsk, Luhansk and other towns in Donbas, but also the shelling of built-up areas must be ruled out completely. Not only a complete cessation of fire but also the withdrawal of all weapons governed by the Minsk agreements to the established distances is crucial for this. The weapons should be closely monitored by the SMM at the permanent storage sites. Unfortunately, the agreement reached in the Trilateral Contact Group on 1 February regarding the withdrawal of weapons by the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk by 5 February has yet to be implemented. The recent proposals by Donetsk setting out concrete steps for stabilizing the truce, which have been submitted to the Ukrainian side under SMM mediation, have also been ignored by the Ukrainian Government.

For all the attention that needs to be paid to the conflict zone in Donbas, the SMM should give broader coverage to the domestic political and socio-economic situation across the territory of Ukraine, since this has a direct impact on the prospects for a peaceful settlement and the implementation of the Minsk agreements. The Mission's scope of reporting falls short of the resources that have been invested in it.

To date we have not heard any response from our colleagues regarding the tightening of the blockade of Donbas by radical groups and some deputies in the Verkhovna Rada. The irony is that they are blocking the delivery of coal to power stations that also produce electricity for government-controlled territory.

The SMM needs to analyse and evaluate the Ukrainian Government's decision (in force since 7 November 2014) to suspend the payment of pensions and social security benefits to Donbas residents. According to the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Ukraine, Mr. Neal Walker, in some cases the Ukrainian authorities have even removed people from the list of persons entitled to welfare payments, in violation of international law and current Ukrainian legislation. We draw the Ukrainian Government's attention to Mr. Walker's appeal that all citizens of Ukraine have the right to social payments, regardless of where they live, and whether they are pensioners or internally displaced persons.

Attention should also be paid to the actions of the so-called activists of the National Corpus party, established by the notorious nationalistic armed formation Azov, including against branches of Russian banks in Ukraine, which, incidentally, are an important element in maintaining financial stability. These are clearly not spontaneous but targeted actions, and lead to an inflaming of inter-ethnic hostility. This is being condoned by the authorities in direct violation of OSCE human rights commitments. The activities of other nationalistic and neo-Nazi groups need to be analysed and assessed. Attempts to rehabilitate and glorify Nazi supporters guilty of crimes against humanity, such as the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, should not be ignored.

I have to conclude on a worrying note. We saw what the consequences of the visit by the former Vice President of the United States of America, Mr. Joe Biden, to Ukraine in mid January of this year entailed. A large-scale provocation was prepared and carried out in the Donetsk area. We hope that the upcoming major international meetings – meetings of the Ministers of Defence of the NATO countries and the G20 Ministers for Foreign Affairs, and the Munich Security Conference – will not be the latest grounds for an escalation.

Thank you for your attention.