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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1343rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 November 2021

**On the deteriorating situation in Ukraine and the continued non-implementation by the
Ukrainian authorities of the Minsk agreements**

Madam Chairperson,

The situation in eastern Ukraine is deeply troubling. The Ukrainian Government has once again embarked on a course of armed provocations. Given the deadlock in all aspects of the settlement process, this tactic is having a detrimental effect on the prospects for implementing the Minsk agreements and is undermining the chances of achieving a sustainable peace in Donbas.

All this is accompanied by a torrent of lies about the allegedly purely defensive actions of the Ukrainian military. At the last meeting of the Permanent Council, the distinguished Permanent Representative of Ukraine spoke of the dissemination of “disinformation” about the Ukrainian armed forces’ “alleged seizure” of the settlement of Staromarivka, next to Hranitne. He claimed that the Ukrainian armed forces’ positions had not changed, and asserted that the accusations that they had crossed the line of contact and violated the Minsk agreements in general were unfounded.

Reality and the revelations of officials in Ukraine itself suggest something quite different. In a segment of the “TSN-Tyzhden” (“TSN Week”) programme on 31 October, the head of the civil-military administration of the Myrna district, Volodymyr Veselkin, officially confirmed that he had himself entered the settlement together with Ukrainian military personnel. “I personally and four of my staff walked into Tsentralnaya Street accompanied by soldiers.” Significantly, these offensive actions were carried out under the veil of rhetoric about an allegedly humanitarian mission. In the same segment of that programme, it was confirmed that the Ukrainian military had gained control over the perimeter of the village during 25–26 October. A pontoon bridge was laid across the Kalmius river so that equipment could be carried over; the remains of the destroyed bridge were seen by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) on 28 October. In its report dated 30 October, the Mission noted that the bridge had not previously been spotted.

Shortly afterwards, the editor-in-chief of the Censor.NET media outlet, Yurii Butusov, who not so long ago was an external adviser to the Minister of Defence of Ukraine, published stills from video footage showing armed Ukrainian soldiers hoisting a flag on the outskirts of Staromarivka. Moreover, in its daily report dated 2 November, the SMM reported seeing a Ukrainian flag and barbed wire about 1.6 kilometres

south-east of Staromarivka. That is at a considerable distance from the line of contact, deep inside the “grey zone”. Traces of fighting were spotted by the Mission there. As we can see, the assertion by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Ukraine that the positions of the Ukrainian armed forces had not changed is not borne out by the facts or by the SMM’s observations.

Incidentally, some of the participants in the discussion today claimed that Russia was concentrating its armed forces near the Ukrainian border. However, in Ukraine itself the opposite is being said – yet again. For example, responding to such claims in an interview with Radio Svoboda on 2 November, Oleksii Danilov, Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, referred to them as “deliberate misinformation”. In particular, he stated: “Let them show the photographs taken there a month or two weeks ago – you will see that the photographs are identical [to the current ones].”

Now back to Staromarivka again. The offensive actions of the Ukrainian military in violation of the Minsk agreements and the ceasefire-strengthening measures of 22 July 2020 have led to an escalation of tensions in the area. In the course of that escalation, the Ukrainian armed forces put a Bayraktar unmanned combat aerial vehicle to combat use on 26 October. Some consequences of the fighting are reflected in the SMM reports from the past week. Impact sites were spotted in the settlements of Telmanove and Yakovlivka (in certain areas of the Donetsk region) and in the village of Hranitne, which is controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces. An SMM camera that had been set up near Hranitne was damaged.

The Mission has to date not given an assessment of the consequences of the presence of Ukrainian military directly within Staromarivka. We expect the SMM to establish the facts as soon as possible on the basis of its examination of the situation there. The information gleaned from conversations with local residents should be reflected promptly in its reports. Incidentally, representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross have organized the delivery of humanitarian supplies to that settlement.

There has also been fresh destruction in other segments of the line of contact. According to the SMM, residential buildings in the city of Donetsk and in certain areas of the Luhansk region have been damaged. It has been confirmed that a woman and girl were injured in the Kuibyshevskiy district of Donetsk. The following facts reported by the authorities in certain areas of Donbas for the period from 27 October onwards have yet to be reflected in the Mission’s reports: namely, how three civilians were injured and six residential buildings were damaged in the settlement of Holmivskiy (Donetsk region) and how damage was sustained by three houses and heating pipes in Donetsk, two apartment blocks in the settlement of Donetskiy, two residential buildings in Novotoshkivske and some houses in Holubivske.

The Ukrainian armed forces have intensified the transport of weapons by rail near the line of contact. Since the start of last week, the SMM has noted the presence of dozens of tanks and, above all, large-calibre artillery at stations along the line of contact. For example, at the Kostiantynivka station in the Donetsk region the monitors saw tanks 96 times; at Druzhkivka they saw tanks nine times, Gvozdika howitzers (of 112 mm calibre) 20 times, Grad multiple-launch rocket systems eight times, and anti-tank guns 12 times. At the Rubizhne station in the Luhansk region, Giatsint-B and Msta-B howitzers (of 152 mm calibre) were spotted 39 times, and Rapira anti-tank guns ten times. And this just over the past ten days. Where is all this equipment headed for? We call on the SMM to step up its monitoring along the line of contact to the fullest possible extent.

It is telling that over in the Ukrainian armed forces they are not hiding their belligerent aspirations. In an interview with the Ukrainian Security and Cooperation Center on 2 November, the commander of the so-called “Joint Forces Operation”, Lieutenant General Oleksandr Pavliuk, pointed out: “We are ready for escalation, ready for a new round of hostilities.” In these circumstances we are hearing – from the United States of America, for example – calls for the restrictions on the supply of lethal weapons to Ukraine to be

lifted. A statement to that effect was made on 28 October by Laura Cooper, Assistant US Secretary of Defense. She also provided information on the latest military supplies recently shipped to Ukraine by the United States.

By supporting, as they put it, the “constructive approach” of the Ukrainian authorities, the external handlers of Ukraine are in fact giving them the illusion that they have complete carte blanche and thereby inciting them to reckless and futile adventures in Donbas. Against this backdrop, no appeals to the Ukrainian Government exhorting it to implement the Minsk agreements in good faith through dialogue with the authorities in Donbas (as actually stipulated by the agreements) are to be heard at all. Such appeals have not been made today either.

It would seem that the creation of tensions on the line of contact is part of the Ukrainian authorities’ plans in the face of the ongoing domestic political difficulties and the deteriorating socio-economic situation in the country. This is a method that the previous leadership of Ukraine also resorted to on more than one occasion. And what about Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s election campaign promise to the Ukrainians that he would achieve peace in Donbas within a year? For now, present-day Ukraine is just being intensively carved, with much help from abroad evidently, into a suicidal “anti-Russia” project.

More than seven years later, not a single one of the paragraphs of the Package of Measures of 12 February 2015 has been fully implemented. The voices of those Ukrainian public figures who are calling for their implementation in the framework of dialogue with the representatives of Donbas are being brutally suppressed. A characteristic example is the ongoing prosecution, initiated at the behest of the Ukrainian intelligence services, of Viktor Medvedchuk, a former representative of the Ukrainian Government in the Humanitarian Working Group of the Trilateral Contact Group, who was empowered to negotiate exchanges of detained persons. He remains in Kyiv under round-the-clock house arrest. As a preventive measure, he additionally had to pledge, on 2 November, not to leave the country.

On the other hand, those who call for the Minsk agreements to be sabotaged and advocate a solution by force to the so-called “Donbas problem” keep occupying positions of responsibility in the leadership of the country and the armed forces. For example, on 2 November it was announced that the radical nationalist Dmytro Yarosh, a former leader of the Right Sector, had been appointed as an adviser to the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Valerii Zaluzhnyi. As is known, the paramilitary structure made up of Ukrainian nationalists that Mr. Yarosh established is currently fighting in Donbas outside the framework of the law.

Today’s approval of the appointment of Oleksii Reznikov, former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Reintegration, as Minister of Defence of Ukraine will also hardly have a positive effect on the settlement process. He made his mark through his numerous calls for the Minsk agreements to be rewritten and is the instigator and co-author of the high-profile draft law on the so-called “transition period”, which implies the Ukrainian Government’s complete repudiation of the logic and the letter of the Package of Measures. The document that has been drafted expressly forbids Ukrainian officials from implementing the Minsk agreements. Its adoption will effectively nullify all the agreements reached in the framework of the settlement process; it will also cancel out the OSCE’s efforts to bring peace closer in Donbas. I would remind you that the document was submitted by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine to the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) for consideration on 9 August.

On 18 October, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe published its opinion on the draft law under consideration. We regret that this opinion is pervaded by a politicized and partisan tone. Setting aside objective analysis of the draft law, the Venice Commission essentially took as its basis the logic of the Ukrainian authorities regarding the alleged necessity of reneging on the Minsk agreements and establishing

some kind of “transition period” that involves neither a special status for Donbas, nor an amnesty for the participants in the events in the region, nor the implementation of other key aspects of the Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, which was endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202 and became part of international law.

One last thing. On 31 October, a racist rally took place in Kyiv. More than a dozen young people dressed in the robes of the Ku Klux Klan, an infamous US organization, paraded unhindered through the city’s main streets carrying placards that read “Yes, we are racists”, “White power” and so on. They concluded their rally on Kyiv’s central square, where they took a group photograph of themselves raising their arms in the Nazi salute. Photographs and videos of this stunt are publicly available. As far as the media were aware, the law enforcement authorities had no questions to ask of the participants in the rally – there are no reports of any arrests. In this regard, we recall the long-overdue need to publish a thematic report by the SMM on manifestations of aggressive nationalism, neo-Nazism and xenophobia in Ukraine. The material for such a report keeps growing with every week that passes.

We call on Ukraine’s external handlers and the relevant OSCE institutions to facilitate, not in words but in deeds, compliance by that country’s authorities with its commitments under international law, including its OSCE commitments. Encouraging disregard for the implementation of these, in particular by abetting the sabotaging of the Package of Measures, undermines the prospects for a sustainable resolution of the internal Ukrainian crisis.

Thank you for your attention.