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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1092<sup>nd</sup> MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

10 March 2016

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

Mr. Chairperson,

All of us agree, as was once again confirmed at the ministerial meeting in the Normandy format in Paris on 3 March, that there is no alternative to the Minsk Package of Measures as the basis for a peaceful settlement of the Ukrainian crisis. Opinions differ on the reasons why it has still not been implemented.

Regarding the ceasefire and the withdrawal of military equipment, the reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) have mentioned violations on both sides. At the same time, a dangerous trend is emerging in which the Ukrainian security forces are gradually taking over the so-called neutral zone, moving their forward positions closer to the areas held by the militias and testing their strength. This is a direct and flagrant violation of the Minsk agreements.

The incident that occurred between 5 and 8 March was provoked by the Ukrainian military's attempt to seize another neutral area in the vicinity of Yasynuvata to the north of Donetsk. We are not surprised that the Ukrainian Government once again hastened to accuse the militias of conducting a false flag operation. This has become their signature style.

It is especially alarming that this happened immediately after the signing of important agreements in the Trilateral Contact Group on 2 March to clear mines and end live-fire exercises.

We urge the Ukrainian Government, the German OSCE Chairmanship and the SMM to take the necessary measures to prevent such provocations from occurring in the future.

We note the positive role played by the concerted actions of the SMM monitors and the representatives of the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC) in preventing that incident from escalating into a larger conflict. We are convinced that further

strengthening their co-operation will make an additional contribution to stabilizing the situation. JCCC representatives and journalists must not come under fire again.

SMM monitors are still needed most in the security zone on both sides of the line of contact. We would welcome more frequent visits to checkpoints located there. The waiting time at checkpoints needs to be reduced and more checkpoints should be opened until the blockade has been completely lifted.

The SMM's reports show that the agreement to stop firing exercises at training ranges in the security zone is for the most part being observed. We also welcome the practical steps taken to mark minefields and clear mines.

These important, although limited, achievements should be built upon. We trust that the work in the Trilateral Contact Group and its specialist subgroups will become more effective at long last. Further steps must be taken to de-escalate the situation, namely a complete ceasefire and the withdrawal of all weapons covered by the agreements. The withdrawal of nationalist battalions, which remain the most destabilizing element, from the conflict zone would undoubtedly help to calm the situation at the line of contact. Direct contact between representatives of the parties' units occupying positions opposite one another would also make an important contribution to building confidence.

Generally, direct dialogue between Kyiv and Donbas, be it on security aspects or the political process, is pivotal for the entire Minsk process. The refusal to engage in substantive talks and look for compromises with Donetsk and Luhansk is good for propaganda and for distracting the population from domestic problems, as are loud statements about the swift "return of Donbas". At the same time, however, these tactics can only drag out the crisis, which is not, objectively speaking, in the interests of the people of Ukraine or its neighbours.

Let me remind you again of some of the things said by Mr. Volodymyr Horbulin, adviser to the President of Ukraine and participant in the negotiations within the Trilateral Contact Group: "The potential for a diplomatic solution to the Donbas conflict problem is being exhausted", "the main and sole stratagem of the Ukrainian State is to buy time and build up its forces", "soon the issue of an active and effective involvement of another foreign policy tool, the armed forces, will emerge". So far, all of this has been confirmed.

This, as we see it, is a perverse logic that proceeds from the assumption that the Minsk agreements are detrimental to Ukraine and consequently must not be implemented.

Our approach is quite the opposite. We believe that the implementation of at least the first stage of the political process – agreement on all the key issues related to the holding of elections in Donbas – can be accelerated.

The sequence of steps outlined in the Minsk agreements and endorsed by the Normandy quartet leaders in Paris on 2 October 2015 should be adhered to. Specifically, it is important to observe the link between the holding of elections, the entry into force of a law on the special status of Donbas on a permanent basis, the amendment of the Ukrainian Constitution to reflect that status and the declaring of an amnesty under the law already adopted by the Verkhovna Rada, but not yet signed by President Petro Poroshenko.

Mr. Chairperson,

We have also read the 13th report by the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine for the period from 16 November 2015 to 15 February 2016.

We are not surprised that the report confirms instances of flagrant human rights violations and crimes committed by the Ukrainian armed forces, intelligence services and radical elements. It is also clear that the investigation of these crimes is being dragged out or sabotaged. As is evident from the report, the Security Service of Ukraine, being one of the main violators, has been openly obstructing the fight against impunity and the search for the perpetrators.

The same is true of the crimes committed on the Maidan in Kyiv, in Odessa and in Mariupol. Investigations are being dragged out and judges are being put under pressure. Generally, Ukraine remains beset by serious problems related to the administration of justice and due process of law in keeping with international standards.

Politically motivated restrictions have been imposed on freedom of expression and assembly and on the work of the media. The authorities turn a blind eye to attempts by radicals to seize places of worship belonging to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate and to violence against believers.

Generally, the condoning of lawlessness, wherever it is politically justified, is a thread that runs through the entire Ukrainian crisis. First of all, there were Molotov cocktails on the Maidan, government offices were occupied in western Ukraine and then across the country, and then the excesses by nationalists and radicals, who are committing unlawful acts not only in the conflict zone but also all over the country. They feel they have the right to pressurize judges and law enforcement authorities. Thugs who live off extortion and informal fees imposed on transit traffic and civilians have mustered under the banner of Right Sector, Svoboda and Aidar. It is considered normal for a member of parliament to enter a foreign diplomatic mission and tear down its national flag, as happened at the Russian consulate in Lviv the other day. We have not seen any resolute action by the Ukrainian law enforcement authorities to ensure the security of the Russian diplomatic mission in Kyiv. Those present in this room should know very well how and under what laws the inviolability of diplomatic missions is meant to be guaranteed. These outrages are likely to continue today.

The supporters of “Western values” are still looking at all this with their eyes firmly shut. Their only desire is to see the continuation of the policy of reforms, in the name of which credulous people were handed out biscuits on the Maidan. This seems to be what some of our colleagues understand by a “rules-based order”.

Thank you for your attention.