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**STATEMENT BY
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RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1345th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 November 2021

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

Madam Chairperson,

As far as the settlement of the crisis in Ukraine is concerned, events are taking a very dangerous turn. The situation in Donbas is alarming and tending to deteriorate. The number of ceasefire violations at the line of contact confirmed by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) is growing. Last week, it increased by 95 per cent for a total of more than five thousand violations.

The Mission has confirmed the casualties and destruction of the past few weeks. Three people were seriously injured as a result of shelling of the settlement of Holmivskyi in the Donetsk region. Fresh destruction of civilian infrastructure was recorded in the city of Donetsk. A cultural centre in the settlement of Holubivske (Luhansk region) was damaged. There was damage to houses in Nyzhnie and to the site of the Popasna water company. In all, since the start of the year, the Mission has corroborated data on 84 casualties, of whom no fewer than 63 people (75 per cent) were killed or injured in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, while 18 were killed or injured in territory controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces. Who, then, is shelling whom? These figures speak for themselves.

The SMM has reported on the latest findings of its observations attesting to the offensive operations undertaken by the Ukrainian armed forces near the settlements of Hranitne and Staromarivka. In its daily report dated 11 November and weekly report dated 16 November, there is confirmation of the engineering works carried out by the Ukrainian military on three existing trench systems and the construction of two new systems, and also of a pontoon bridge having been laid across the river Kalmius. As assessed by the Mission, the new fortifications imply a forward move of at least 1 km, which has decreased the distances between the forward positions of the Ukrainian armed forces and those of the armed formations in this area of the security zone from 1.7 km to 900 m. Will the distinguished representatives of Ukraine publicly assert today, as they did at the Permanent Council meeting on 28 October, that the positions of the Ukrainian armed forces in that area remain unchanged and accuse the other participants in the discussion of disseminating disinformation. We would ask our esteemed US colleagues whether they actually read the SMM reports. They said today that Ukraine was demonstrating “remarkable restraint”. Offensive operations by the Ukrainian armed forces, which have moved forward one kilometre – is that “restraint”?

We must emphasize that the offensive operations of the Ukrainian armed forces were undertaken in contravention of the very first paragraph of the ceasefire-strengthening measures that were agreed on by the Ukrainian Government and the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) on 22 July 2020. The mounting tensions observed in Donbas are a direct consequence of the Ukrainian armed forces' violation of these measures and of the wrecking of efforts to prevent ceasefire violations and also to investigate such violations through a co-ordination mechanism facilitated by the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC) in its current setting. I would remind you that for more than a month now, the Ukrainian Government has been detaining a representative of Luhansk to the JCCC in its current setting: he was abducted by the Ukrainian military and intelligence services in the area for the disengagement of forces and hardware near Zolote. Incidentally, the mechanism for providing security guarantees has ceased to function since then – a mechanism that is essential to carry out repairs to civilian infrastructure and tackle other humanitarian issues. The first step towards restoring that mechanism must, of course, be the release of the detained representative of Luhansk to the JCCC and his repatriation to the region.

On 12 November, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, and the Minister of Defence of Ukraine, Oleksii Reznikov, showed up at the line of contact in the Luhansk region. On 14 November, they both visited other military facilities in the country. Their rhetoric all the while sounded most bellicose. Mr. Reznikov for one was altogether categorical: the task of the Ukrainian military, as he put it, was to do everything possible to “move out on to the borders” of Ukraine. Not one word was said, though, about the Minsk agreements and the Ukrainian Government's obligations stipulated therein regarding a political settlement through direct dialogue with the representatives of certain areas of Donbas.

While visiting the settlement of Zolote in the Luhansk region, Mr. Reznikov announced that further Bayraktar unmanned combat aerial vehicles were to be procured. I would remind you that the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine already reported the combat use of such an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) during offensive operations in the area of Staromarivka on 26 October. Ukrainian officials are unfazed by the fact that the use of military aircraft is prohibited under the Minsk agreements and also by the fact that the use of any type of UAV is categorically at odds with the ceasefire-strengthening measures.

This is all concrete evidence of the Ukrainian Government's targeted escalation of the situation at the line of contact. By the way, we are surprised that the egregious and demonstrative violations by the Ukrainian armed forces of the arrangements for de-escalation agreed on with the authorities in Donbas are not eliciting a proper response either from the OSCE Chairmanship or from the external handlers of the Ukrainian authorities, notably Germany and France as the “Normandy format” co-sponsors of the Minsk agreements.

Instead of an impartial response to these real violations, we are seeing something else, namely attempts to give the conflict in eastern Ukraine an international flavour, not least by repeating the fabrications about “aggression” and “occupation”. At the same time, on the basis of a fragmentary interpretation of the Minsk agreements, they are persistently singling out, from all the aspects of the settlement process, issues related to the segment of the border in Donbas not controlled by the Ukrainian Government and prioritizing those. In this respect we may observe an incorrect interpretation of paragraph 4 of the Minsk Protocol and a manipulation of paragraph 9 of the Package of Measures.

Given the current situation at the line of contact, where tensions have risen owing to the Ukrainian armed forces' actions, attempts to reduce all discussions under the settlement process to the topic of the border may in general be indicative of a striving to divert attention from the Ukrainian Government's armed provocations and preparations. We consider it destructive and detrimental to the efforts to resolve the crisis

that attempts are being made to involve the SMM in this tactic, that is, to redirect its resources to the monitoring of areas far away from the line of contact, rather than conducting observations where these are chiefly required. It is also legitimate to ask why there are no proposals to have such measures accompanied by a reciprocal enhancement of the monitoring in the rear positions of the Ukrainian armed forces near the line of contact.

As reported by the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk in the JCCC, a number of infrastructure facilities along the line of contact were damaged over the past week as a result of shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces – for example, an electricity cable in the settlement of Ozerianivka, near Horlivka, where more than two hundred residents suffered a power blackout as a result of shelling by 120 mm mortars on 11 November. It is also worth noting the damage caused by shelling with 152 mm artillery on 14 November to gas pipelines in the settlements of Yuzhna Lomuvatka and Chervonyi Prapor in certain areas of the Luhansk region. On the same day, the suburbs of Donetsk and the outskirts of the settlement of Troitske in the Luhansk region came under fire from large-calibre artillery. The next day, the building of functioning School No. 4 in Zolote-5/Mykhailivka suffered damage for the umpteenth time. On 17 November, three houses in the settlement of Lozove were damaged. At this very moment, reports are coming in of how the building of the Industrial Pedagogical College in the city of Pervomaisk near Luhansk has been shelled. All these facts have yet to be verified by the SMM. We are counting on the SMM to record and reflect them promptly in its reports.

The crisis in Ukraine, which began after the brazen foreign interference in that country's internal affairs in 2013–2014 and has led to the erosion of its sovereignty, continues to be stoked up from abroad. The foreign sponsors of the current Ukrainian authorities are in fact supporting their belligerent aspirations and pumping further tonnes of weapons into the country. On the day that a gas pipeline and residential buildings on the outskirts of Luhansk were shelled, the latest shipment of military supplies consisting of 80 tonnes of ammunition worth 60 million US dollars arrived in Kyiv as part of the military “assistance” provided by the United States of America. Which infrastructure and community facilities in Donbas will be hit by these munitions? How many new casualties will they cause among the civilian population? There is no doubt that the delivery of military supplies to Ukraine is giving its current authorities the illusion that the “Donbas problem” can be resolved through a blitzkrieg-style operation and is effectively provoking them to undertake further military adventures in the region.

For seven years now, military personnel from a number of NATO countries have been present in Ukraine as instructors – nominally on a rotational basis, but in practice continuously, on a permanent basis. They are there not as individual soldiers but, rather, as part of organized groups and formations of foreign armed forces. They are brought to Ukraine by foreign military transport aircraft. How does their presence in the country square with paragraph 10 of the Minsk Package of Measures (endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202), which stipulates the “[w]ithdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under monitoring of the OSCE”? Or is the OSCE not monitoring them there?

Mr. Reznikov, the new Minister of Defence, makes no secret of the fact that he is guided by the task of paving the way for the further military assimilation of Ukrainian territory by NATO. Back in 2019, references to Ukraine's non-bloc status were removed from its national legislation, while the policy of drawing closer to the North Atlantic Alliance was enshrined in the country's Constitution without taking any account whatsoever of the opinion of its inhabitants through a nationwide referendum. Will pan-European security benefit from this? Quite clearly not.

The Ukrainian Government's sabotaging of the Minsk agreements and of the instructions from the “Normandy format” summit [in Paris] has brought the situation in the existing discussion formats to a

standstill. No dialogue is taking place between the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk to reach agreement on all legal aspects of a special status for Donbas, as provided for by the Package of Measures and the recommendations from the “Normandy format” summit of 9 December 2019. Moreover, the Ukrainian authorities openly and cynically admit that they are merely pretending to work on the political strand of the settlement process.

On 15 November, the First Deputy Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament), Oleksandr Kornienko, spoke about the need to formally extend the law on the special status of Donbas, which was adopted in 2014 but has yet to enter into force (the one-year period for which it had previously been extended expires on 31 December of this year). In an interview with Interfax-Ukraine he acknowledged that the document was merely “a formal token indicating that Ukraine remains part of the Minsk process”. He elaborated on how “the law is not operational; not a single article will come into effect; it is just being extended every year.” In addition, more than a year later, the Ukrainian Government has yet to respond to the draft road map for comprehensive implementation of the Minsk agreements submitted by the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk at the TCG.

Over in Kyiv they have no qualms either about blocking efforts to tackle humanitarian challenges. The socio-economic blockade of Donbas remains in force to this day; even during the coronavirus pandemic it has not been lifted by the Ukrainian authorities. Against this backdrop, with a view to providing humanitarian support for the region’s population, the President of the Russian Federation decided on 15 November to arrange for the certificates of origin of goods produced in Donbas to be recognized and for these goods to be allowed to enter the Russian market on an exceptional basis until a political settlement of the situation there has been achieved. Incidentally, this decision by no means contravenes the letter or the spirit of the Minsk agreements, as some participants in our discussion are trying to make out. One gets the impression that they have not read paragraph 11 of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015. That paragraph provides for cross-border economic co-operation between certain areas of Donbas and districts of the Russian Federation. It also stipulates that the Government of Ukraine should, pursuant to its obligations under the Minsk agreements, support such co-operation. In addition, Russia continues to send humanitarian aid to the residents of Donbas.

Another important aspect is the search for persons who have gone missing, using a mechanism that the parties should develop within the TCG. At the meetings of the TCG and its Humanitarian Working Group on 9 and 10 November, the Ukrainian Government again ducked away from substantive discussions on that matter with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. It would seem that the authorities want, by hook or by crook, to conceal the crimes committed by the Ukrainian military and armed nationalists against the civilian population during their punitive operation.

The scale of the problem is reflected in the following figures. Over the past three months that the special commission tasked with finding missing persons has been operating, the remains of 267 people have been unearthed in certain areas of the Luhansk region alone – all in the environs of these population centres: Sabivka, Krasnodon, Pervomaisk, Vidnoye and Slovianoserbsk. According to data from the authorities in certain areas of the Donetsk region, the corpses of 147 civilians have been unearthed since 2014 in the environs of Snizhne, Debaltseve, Khartsyzsk and other population centres.

One further point. On 12 November, at a meeting of the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly during the Assembly’s 76th session, a resolution on combating the glorification of Nazism was adopted. It was co-authored by 58 States. The resolution was adopted by 121 votes to 2, with 53 abstentions; as in previous years, the only two countries voting against it were Ukraine and the United States. This is a most revealing stance by a country in which streets and community facilities are named

after Nazi accomplices – a country in which associations of paramilitary nationalists who glorify these enjoy State support and wage war in Donbas.

We once again call upon the external handlers of Ukraine and the relevant OSCE institutions to facilitate, not in words but in practice, compliance by the authorities of that country with its obligations. Connivance in the sabotaging of the Package of Measures is undermining the prospects for a peaceful resolution of the internal Ukrainian crisis.

Thank you for your attention.