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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1036th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 January 2015

On the need for urgent steps to implement the Minsk agreements

Mr. Chairperson,

It is interesting to note that no arguments, possible motives or evidence are cited here in support of the accusations against Russia. These accusations are completely unsubstantiated. It is unlikely that there is any other country in this room that is more interested than Russia in resolving the internal Ukrainian crisis. Unlike many partners, we are doing everything possible to reduce the tensions there and achieve a political settlement.

The current escalation of violence in Ukraine is unacceptable. We deeply regret all the casualties among the civilian population, which continues to suffer as a result of this crisis in all the cities, towns and villages, without exception, that are affected by the conflict – Horlivka, Donetsk, Luhansk, Mariupol and many others.

We have noted one distinctive detail. As soon as progress is made towards solving the crisis by peaceful means or as soon as there is a chance of reaching a political agreement, forces interested in disrupting the peace process and continuing the war immediately become active.

At the Berlin meeting of foreign ministers in the Normandy format on 12 January, everyone reaffirmed their steadfast commitment to a comprehensive and exclusively peaceful resolution of the crisis, including the start of a sustainable political process. Literally just after the meeting ended, Donetsk and Horlivka suffered the most intense shelling, resulting in over 100 casualties. The next day, tragedy struck near Volnovakha. Kyiv and Washington made presumptuous accusations against the Donetsk People's Republic, without even waiting for the preliminary findings.

Monitors from the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) examined the explosion craters. Unfortunately, they did not report anything about the nature of the damage sustained by the bus. It is true that President Petro Poroshenko brought a piece of the Volnovakha bus's perforated body to Davos. It is a pity that he did not bring along some of the numerous

fragments of the buses, trolleybuses and fixed-route taxis from Donetsk in which passengers were killed by Ukrainian artillery strikes.

On 15 January, the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, sent a message to Mr. Poroshenko proposing that heavy weapons, including artillery and multiple-launch rocket systems, be withdrawn to a distance at which they would be no longer able to inflict damage on local communities. Instead of an appropriate response, Kyiv made some militaristic statements, launched a new “wave” of mobilization and ordered an intensification of armed operations along virtually the entire perimeter separating the opposing sides.

On 21 January, Berlin hosted yet another meeting where everyone advocated an immediate withdrawal of heavy weapons from the line of contact stipulated in the Minsk Memorandum of 19 September 2014. This is actually what was proposed in President Putin’s message. It was agreed that working subgroups involving all concerned parties should be established to address specific issues. The prospect of holding a Normandy-format summit in Astana was also discussed.

Some consider these agreements to be utterly unacceptable. The next morning Donetsk was shelled, and tens of civilians were killed. It is difficult enough to convince the insurgents in the Donetsk People’s Republic to resume dialogue with Kyiv, despite their desire to stop the deadly bombardment of their cities from behind the line of contact. Now this task has become much harder.

Mr. Chairperson,

We are deeply shocked and outraged by the tragedy in Mariupol and the death of dozens of innocent people. We roundly condemn the shelling of cities, wherever it comes from, and the fact that this results in numerous casualties. We sympathize deeply with the family and friends of the dead and injured.

We agree with the statement by the Chief Monitor, Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan. These dangerous developments should be stopped immediately. The people of Ukraine need peace. An immediate ceasefire is required. The sides must return to the negotiating table without delay and start fulfilling the Minsk agreements.

We support his call for a complete and impartial investigation. It should indeed be conducted carefully, with the involvement of independent experts with appropriate equipment. We draw attention to the fact that our capitals, the United Nations Security Council and other international organizations are following the SMM reports closely now. They should contain balanced information. Prior to the Mariupol tragedy, the SMM refrained from immediately publishing its conclusions, let alone pointing a finger at the culprits. For some reason, the authors of the spot report of 24 January did this after a brief examination of the area, without conducting a careful expert investigation and despite the existence of a large amount of conflicting information. The political price to pay for hasty conclusions is now high.

In conclusion, I should like to draw attention to the following points. Over the past few weeks, all the representatives of the Normandy format have worked actively to create a climate for direct dialogue between the parties and to ensure a peaceful resolution of the crisis. All of us, including the Ukrainian representatives, made absolutely unequivocal

statements in this regard. Persisting disagreements between the parties, including the discrepancy between the actual line of contact and the one that was specified in Minsk, can be resolved through direct dialogue between the parties and with the support of the “mechanisms agreed upon on the ground”. During the last Permanent Council meeting, we supported this process and expressed the hope that it would be possible to achieve progress in this area.

In this respect, the approach of some of our colleagues has made us very apprehensive. Instead of supporting the peace process, they have started expressing scepticism about the effectiveness of the Normandy format and have begun to say that the Minsk format is no longer effective.

It is important to understand that real results can be achieved only through direct dialogue by Kyiv with Donetsk and Luhansk. In that respect, there is no alternative to the Minsk format and the Contact Group, in which all the opposing Ukrainian parties are represented.

A sustainable solution to the Ukrainian crisis, which would be in the interests of Ukraine’s entire population, is possible only through the start at the earliest opportunity of direct nationwide dialogue on constitutional reform with the participation of all the regions and political forces of Ukraine in order to achieve national reconciliation and national accord.

Thank you for your attention.