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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1083rd MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 December 2015

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

Mr. Chairperson,

I should like to thank you for your extraordinary patience throughout the year in guiding our discussions in the Permanent Council on the settlement of the Ukrainian crisis. Unfortunately, these discussions were often a far cry from mutually respectful, diplomatic dialogue geared towards finding constructive solutions, which should be the hallmark of our pan-European organization. What demonstrably stand out are bilateral or narrow formats, in which the discussion is pragmatic and results-oriented. This is something we observed particularly during the recent visit to Moscow by the Secretary of State of the United States of America, John Kerry. This style also characterizes the Normandy format meetings.

All the same, I should like our work in the Permanent Council to support the Minsk process and assist in finding solutions within the specialist subgroups of the Trilateral Contact Group and, more importantly, their implementation in practice.

There is a need for real steps to de-escalate the situation in Donbas. We recall that on 4 December Ukrainian forces captured seven towns in the buffer zone that were not under either side's control. This has already led to increased clashes and shelling on both sides. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) has confirmed that a punitive cleansing operation was conducted in one of these towns, Krasnohorivka, and 85 local residents were arrested on charges of sympathizing with the Donbas insurgents. Measures like these simply embitter the local population and do nothing to help reintegrate the region into the rest of Ukraine. It is important to ensure that all these locations are vacated by the Ukrainian forces if the situation is to be stabilized.

We look forward to even more active work by the SMM monitors in the security zone. The deployment of bases in Debaltseve and Horlivka should provide the Mission with additional capacity. The growing Ukrainian military presence near the line of contact, especially the increased activities of Right Sector and other similar uncontrolled groups, is cause for concern.

The ceasefire should help bring the process of withdrawing all the weapon types on which agreements were reached in Minsk to its logical conclusion. This will also enable more active work to restore critical infrastructure to provide the people of Donbas with heating, electricity and water. It is also essential to rebuild the houses damaged as a result of the shelling by the Ukrainian security forces.

We welcome the progress made in reaching agreement on the demining of 12 individual areas and facilities in Donbas with the involvement of the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination and the assistance of the SMM. Strengthening direct contacts between the parties on the ground is of crucial importance in this context.

Greater effort needs to be made to improve the situation of the residents of Donbas. In addition to the deliveries of humanitarian aid, the number of crossing points on the line of contact needs to be increased. It would be useful to establish a regular or permanent SMM presence at these points.

The development of direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government and Donetsk and Luhansk and the central authorities' willingness to engage in joint work and reach agreement on all the questions covered by the Minsk Package of Measures are the key to making progress in resolving the Ukrainian crisis. We understand that this is not easy for Ukraine, which is experiencing a period of heightened internal conflicts among the various factions of the "Maidan victors". However, we have all seen how great the influence of the overseas sponsors of the "revolution" is on the Ukrainian Government. The time is right to exploit this influence in full measure to ensure that the Package of Measures is implemented in full. It is time to desist from the destructive policy of excusing the actions of the Ukrainian authorities for no good reason. Why create the illusion that Ukraine is implementing its share of the commitments in full and in good faith, when not even a semblance of this can be seen?

Sensing this support, Ukraine has no qualms about falling back on absurd assertions. Since last year we have been hearing that the security forces and volunteer battalions were apparently not shelling Ukrainian towns. All the destruction was allegedly on the conscience of foreign fighters and others. This week, we heard from the Ukrainian representative that apparently the Ukrainian armed forces are not the ones laying mines in Donbas, since Ukraine is a signatory to the convention prohibiting the use of anti-personnel mines.

We call on our colleagues to stop taking up the cry that the implementation of the Package of Measures depends exclusively on Russia. Firstly, this is a lie; secondly, it gives Ukraine a reason to drag out the implementation of the Minsk agreements even further.

There is currently no progress in terms of reaching an agreement on the modalities for local elections, an amnesty, consolidating the special status of Donbas or conducting real constitutional reform. Even on those questions where compromises have apparently been achieved in the subgroup on political issues on the basis of the proposals by Pierre Morel, the Ukrainian side is backing out. The agreements reached at the Normandy format summit on 2 October, which, among other things, involve drawing up a new separate Ukrainian law on the holding of local elections, were revised by the Ukrainian Government almost the very next day.

Direct contacts are also necessary if the agreement on the exchange of prisoners on an “all for all” basis is to be implemented properly and complete lists are to be compiled, including of missing persons.

We once again remind those colleagues who believe it is essential to restore the Ukrainian Government’s control of the State border throughout the conflict zone that this stage will not be reached without the conclusion of a comprehensive political settlement. This, in turn, hinges on the entry into force of a law on special status, the holding of elections, and constitutional reform.

It is worth emphasizing once again that there is no alternative to the implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures if we are to achieve a lasting settlement of the Ukrainian crisis. Obviously, work must also continue on its implementation next year. We trust that our Western colleagues will be able to exert the necessary influence on Ukraine to achieve real progress to that end.

Thank you for your attention.