

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1189th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 June 2018

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The state of affairs regarding the implementation by the parties to the conflict – the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk – of their commitments under the Minsk agreements was analysed at the meeting of the Normandy format foreign ministers on 11 June in Berlin. An understanding was reached on the need to implement the Package of Measures, which was supported by the quartet leaders in 2015 and 2016, including its political provisions. The foreign ministers agreed that there is a need for urgent de-escalation of the situation in Donbas, the establishment of a ceasefire regime, the disengagement of forces and hardware, the withdrawal of heavy weapons and the protection of critical civilian infrastructure facilities. The importance of solving humanitarian problems and releasing detained persons was confirmed.

On 6 June, a statement by the President of the Security Council was adopted by the United Nations Security Council, which clearly points out the need for strict implementation of the Package of Measures, endorsed by UN Security Council resolution 2202 (2015), and also the measures agreed in the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG).

We hope that these signals will enable the Ukrainian Government to show restraint, abandon reckless military action and go back to implementing the Minsk Package of Measures, which remains the only framework for a peaceful settlement.

Agreement was reached at the TCG meeting in Minsk on 13 June on ensuring the safety of workers as they travel to and from the Donetsk filtration station. We trust that Ukraine has sent the necessary orders to the commanders of the Ukrainian armed forces on the ground. We support the proposal by the Co-ordinator of the Working Group on Security Issues, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan, to take immediate steps for a ceasefire. The publication of orders regarding the non-use of weapons, a ban on returning fire, confirmation of the obligations under the existing agreements, and a ban on offensive actions and the dispatching of

commandos could be an important step towards de-escalating tension. Attempts to hamper these constructive initiatives by insisting on artificial linkages are unacceptable. We welcome the proposals by the Co-ordinator of the Working Group on Humanitarian Issues, Mr. Toni Frisch, regarding a declaration prohibiting the use of torture against detained persons. We call for a solution as soon as possible with regard to repairing the bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska on the basis of proposals by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The Ukrainian crisis has dragged on for too long. Its use for the purpose of inflaming Russophobia is costing the Ukrainian people far too dearly. We cannot but recall the fourth anniversary of the air raid by the Ukrainian armed forces on Luhansk on 2 June, as a result of which eight people were killed and 28 injured. The Ukrainian representatives then tried to deny the use of some 20 aerial bombs by claiming that the damage was caused by an air-conditioning unit exploding in the State administration building. This is typical of the current authorities in Kyiv.

The essence of the Ukrainian Government's punitive operation has not changed in four years. Its criminal goal is to intimidate the people of Donbas and sow hatred and destruction. Unfortunately, the deterrent effect of the Ukrainian armed forces' military defeats in winter 2015, which led to the signing of the Minsk Package of Measures, is wearing off. We need a consolidated call for the Ukrainian Government to fulfil its obligations in good faith.

Since the start of the "Combined Forces Operation", the Ukrainian armed forces have stepped up their combat activities in Donbas. The Ukrainian security forces have attempted to break through near Horlivka and in the Mariupol region, which cost them considerable losses. Ukrainian forces are occupying the demilitarized areas of Zolote and Petrivske, while the armed formations of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions refrain from this.

According to the SMM, three Donbas civilians have been killed and nine injured as a result of indiscriminate shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces since 31 May. The most egregious incident occurred on 7 June in Kirovsk, when Ukrainian soldiers fired a mortar round at a bus, injuring five women and two men.

The SMM confirmed the reports that the village of Chihari in the "grey zone" near Horlivka has been seized by security forces. The fighting unleashed by the Ukrainian forces has resulted in the majority of the houses being destroyed or burnt down in this village, and running water and basic necessities are unavailable. Ukrainian soldiers are housed in the buildings that remain, and ammunition is stored there. Civilians have been forced to leave this village. The Ukrainian security forces have moved dangerously close to the militia positions, and a new hotbed of instability has emerged.

In violation of the TCG Framework Decision on the Disengagement of Forces and Hardware of 21 September 2016, Ukrainian security forces have occupied the disengagement areas in Zolote and Petrivske. The status quo that existed in these areas in 2016 needs to be restored immediately and the disengagement of forces and hardware in Stanytsia Luhanska completed. On more than 20 occasions, the SMM recorded periods of seven days or more of complete observance of the ceasefire.

The situation around the Donetsk filtration station remains critical. The Ukrainian armed forces intend to take it by force. The SMM has evidence that the security forces' fortified positions came within 500 metres of the filtration station. They confirm that the Ukrainian authorities have failed to take action on demining. As a result of continuing exchanges of fire, the Donetsk filtration station has been forced to suspend its operations since 7 June. This has affected the water supply to over 350,000 people. The Donbas militia declare that they are ready to agree on additional security measures around the infrastructure facilities.

Mr. Chairperson,

The crisis triggered by the Maidan events in 2014 cannot be resolved without implementing the political provisions of the Package of Measures. This is possible only through direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk without further subterfuge.

The entire range of political aspects of a settlement, including the procedure for enacting the law on the special status of Donbas, was discussed in detail at the ministers' meeting in Berlin. The Trilateral Contact Group should formalize the so-called Steinmeier formula, which provides for the holding of local elections in Donbas and the entry into force of the law on special status. The formula was endorsed at the Normandy format summit in Paris on 2 October 2015 and reaffirmed in Berlin on 19 October 2016. An arrangement for a political settlement has been worked out. The Ukrainian Government has signed up to this, but the Ukrainian leadership lacks the political responsibility to take the first step towards practical implementation of the agreement.

Those in favour of resolving the civil conflict by force have strong positions in the Ukrainian Government. General Serhiy Nayev, commander of the "Combined Forces Operation", said (in an interview with the Ukrainian national news on 12 June) that the Ukrainian armed forces are ready to use the entire range of weapons in their arsenal in Donbas, including air power. The commanders have been granted the right to decide for themselves regarding the use of weapons at the line of contact. It would be interesting to hear an assessment of these opinions by our distinguished Normandy format colleagues from France and Germany.

The logic is familiar. The United States Government is also trying to "protect" the Ukrainian authorities from having to implement the Package of Measures by falsely linking some of its provisions with a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbas in line with the Ukrainian Government's logic. Attempts to establish some kind of politico-military command post in the region, which would take control of the territory of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, are at odds with the Minsk Package of Measures. Any forms of international assistance in resolving the internal Ukrainian crisis, including under the auspices of the UN, should be based on the consent of the parties to this conflict – the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk. A peaceful political settlement is possible only through direct dialogue. This concept provides the basis for the Russian draft UN Security Council resolution in support of the OSCE and the Minsk Package of Measures, to which neither the Ukrainian Government nor the US Government has responded so far.

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation beyond south-eastern Ukraine merely confirms that it will not be easy to make progress towards a settlement in Donbas given the current conditions in Ukraine. Ethnocultural nationalism continues to be fostered in the country. The discriminatory provisions of the Law on Education, which has placed not only the country's Russian population but also its Hungarian, Romanian and Polish populations in a vulnerable position, have not been revoked. The clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church continue to be harassed. Crimes motivated by ethnic or religious hatred are reported on an almost daily basis in Ukraine. The latest incident was reported by the SMM on 7 June. A group of radicals from the National Militia used axes and hammers to destroy a Roma camp in Kyiv. Freedom House has been sounding the alarm about the increase in attacks by far-right nationalists on members of national minorities since early 2018 and their impunity.

Efforts to clamp down on freedom of speech and harass journalists are gaining momentum. The head of RIA Novosti Ukraine, Kirill Vyshinsky, remains in custody on the absurd, trumped-up charge of treason. On 2 June, the Security Service of Ukraine attempted to recruit Irina Viskovich, a RIA Novosti correspondent in Lithuania. Pressure, threats, provocations by the intelligence services, physical violence and political trials involving journalists have become the norm in Ukraine. Alongside the notorious Mirotvorets website, the Ukrainian security forces have begun to intimidate members of the press with "hit lists". Following the murders of Oles Buzina and Pavel Sheremet, nearly everyone fears becoming the next "sacrificial victim".

We hope that the Ukrainian Government's violations of the rights of journalists and national minorities will not go unnoticed in the West. Although the joint press release on the results of the EU-Ukraine Human Rights Dialogue in Brussels on 31 May does not condemn the aforementioned crimes and violations, we hope that the relevant signals will nevertheless be transmitted to the Ukrainian authorities. The international community needs to take a consolidated stance in order to warn the Ukrainian Government not only against infantile games like the "staged murder of Arkady Babchenko", but also large-scale armed provocations in Donbas.

Thank you for your attention.