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PC.DEL/79/20
31 January 2020

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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AT THE 1257th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 January 2020

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

Mr. Chairperson,

Despite diplomatic efforts, including those within the OSCE, the crisis in Ukraine continues. The skirmishes in Donbas go on unabated. The most tense situation in recent days was in the Popasna-Pervomaisk-Zolote area, on the outskirts of Horlivka and Mariupol, and in the area between Donetsk airport, Yasynuvata and Avdiivka. There are problems once again in the disengagement area in Petrivske. Fresh casualties have been recorded among the civilian population as a result of the Ukrainian Government's military operation. Over the past week, two people have been injured by exploding mines in the Luhansk region. Civilian infrastructure is once again under threat – damage was seen in the Petrovskiy district of Donetsk on 27 January.

In violation of the Minsk agreements, the Ukrainian military is using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Among the recent examples confirmed by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) were a Ukrainian armed forces' UAV near the settlement of Lebedynske in the Donetsk region on 23 January and a similar device near the settlement of Zhelanne Druhe on 26 January.

At yesterday's meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) in Minsk, the parties – the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk – failed to reach fundamental agreements. There has been no tangible progress so far in carrying out the specific instructions of the "Normandy format" summit of 9 December 2019 on the political track and in the security sphere. None of this is surprising against the background of the statements heard from the Ukrainian Government regarding its desire to revise the Minsk agreements.

Such comments are not at all in keeping with what we have heard here many times from the representative of Ukraine, including this year. There have been attempts to assure us all of the Ukrainian Government's commitment to completely fulfilling its obligations under the Minsk agreements. However, the Ukrainian officials are saying something else, actually refusing to implement the provisions of the agreements. Let me quote the words spoken by Ukraine's representative to the TCG Political Working Group, Oleksiy Reznikov, in an interview with *Novoye Vremya* on 23 January: "Ukraine's new position remains unchanged. It was proclaimed during the Normandy Four summit by President Zelenskyi; it is also

being voiced by the representative of Ukraine in the Trilateral Contact Group Leonid Kuchma, it is being voiced by me as well – the Minsk agreements are subject to revision, at least partially.”¹

We should like to hear a response in this room from our “Normandy format” partners, the distinguished representatives of France and Germany, to such comments by official representatives of the Ukrainian Government. Are the plans voiced by the Ukrainian officials for the revision of the Minsk agreements consistent with the vision of our French and German colleagues of the prospects for a settlement of the Ukrainian crisis? How do such comments tally with the outcome document of the Normandy Four’s Paris summit in general? The leaders, including President Zelenskyi, confirmed at the summit meeting that the Minsk agreements were the framework for future work, and that they themselves would ensure their full implementation.

It seems that the Ukrainian Government is ready to go to any lengths to generally discredit the Minsk agreements. For example, Ukraine’s State Bureau of Investigation recently instituted criminal proceedings regarding possible treason during the signing by the former President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, of documents in Minsk on the settlement of the Ukrainian crisis.

It is quite clear that the Ukrainian Government is trying to drag out the implementation of the political part of the Minsk agreements, which provide for the granting of permanent special status to Donbas, constitutional reform, the definition of modalities and the holding of local elections. We also see a long-standing unwillingness to implement the paragraph on amnesty and non-prosecution in connection with the events in Donbas.

We are very concerned at the continuing attempts by the Ukrainian side to downplay the importance of the TCG and move negotiations on key issues to various levels of the “Normandy format”. It is undoubtedly a very important mechanism in facilitating a peaceful settlement in Ukraine. However, improving the effectiveness of direct dialogue between the representatives of the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk remains the key to success. The fact that the Ukrainian representatives are avoiding such dialogue is an attempt to sabotage the Package of Measures and suspend the entire settlement process. The conditions for progress are in place. What is needed is the political will of the Ukrainian Government to act in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, endorsed by the United Nations Security Council and to which there is no alternative.

The ceasefire regime needs to be consistently respected and productive dialogue needs to begin on agreeing on all the legal aspects of the special status of Donbas to ensure that it is implemented on a permanent basis. Agreeing on additional areas for the disengagement of forces and hardware would also be an important contribution towards de-escalation. I would remind you that the Normandy Four set the TCG the task of achieving this by the end of March 2020. The representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk submitted their proposals back in December 2019, immediately after the Paris summit. The Ukrainian Government’s counter-proposals followed only a month later, but so far the parties have not reached a full agreement on any of the options, even on determining the co-ordinates of the very promising area in Hnutove.

Against the background of the unresolved crisis in the east of the country, the Ukrainian Government is pushing deliberately confrontational initiatives that are increasingly splitting society. Last week, we spoke in detail about the infringement of the linguistic, educational and cultural rights of the Russian-speaking population and national minorities. These conditions call not only for active work by the SMM in Donbas,

1 Interview with the representative of Ukraine in the Political Working Group of the Trilateral Contact Group in *Novoye Vremya*: “The Minsk agreements should be revised, we will insist on this.” URL: https://youtu.be/_9zpT5WPdnc (last visited 30 January 2020).

but also for the intensification of its monitoring efforts in the rest of Ukraine. All the legislative steps and initiatives of the Ukrainian Government that directly affect the implementation of the Package of Measures, notably with regard to the special status of Donbas, need to be carefully recorded. We expect a thorough analysis from the SMM of the situation as it develops.

The Ukrainian authorities are still condoning manifestations of aggressive nationalism, neo-Nazism and anti-Semitism. The violent actions of radicals, and their hate-filled slogans and hate speech during Nazi-style torchlit marches frequently do not receive a proper legal evaluation in the country. Instead, Ukraine continues to try to glorify those who, through blood and violence, have propagated a cult of Ukrainian national exclusivity. They glorify members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the SS Division Galicia who brought dishonour on themselves by collaborating with the Nazis, and celebrate other adherents of the construction of a nationally oriented statehood through the oppression of the so-called non-titular peoples. An unprecedented campaign to rewrite history continues in Ukraine, and the country itself has turned into a State with an unpredictable past.

President Zelenskyi's comments on the occasion of the anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau demonstrated that he is in fact moving closer to the positions of radical nationalists in the rewriting of history. We will not have to wait long to see the outcomes of this rewriting. For example, the solemn funeral of the 99-year-old veteran of the SS Division Galicia, Mikhail Mulik, took place in Ivano-Frankivsk on 28 January. People wore Nazi uniforms at the funeral service, which was attended by the regional governor Oleksandr Sych (a video report about this event was shown on local television). On the orders of the municipality, this member of the SS was buried in the central Avenue of Glory in Ivano-Frankivsk. So, these are the "heroes" they wish to glorify.

All this looks particularly sacrilegious as we mark the anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps by the Red Army. Playing with history in this way desecrates the memory of the martyrs of the Holocaust and all the victims of Nazism.