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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
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AT THE 1340th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

21 October 2021

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

Madam Chairperson,

The Ukrainian Government's actions are a cause of growing concern about the fate of the collective efforts within the OSCE to resolve the crisis in Ukraine. The demonstrative disregard by the Ukrainian leadership for its obligations under the ceasefire-strengthening measures of 22 July 2020 is evident on all fronts.

On 16 October, the Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, Oleksii Danilov, and before him, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, on 25 September and the commander of the Joint Forces Operation, Oleksandr Pavliuk, on 5 October all said the same thing: there are no restrictions on Ukrainian soldiers opening fire in the zone where the military operation is being conducted in Donbas and decisions are taken by the commanders on the ground at their discretion without any orders from the leadership of the Ukrainian armed forces. Such statements are tantamount to a disavowal of Ukraine's commitment to the ceasefire-strengthening measures. Incidentally, it is stipulated that these measures cannot be revoked by any other orders, including secret ones. Of course, all of this also directly contradicts the statements by the representatives of Ukraine in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) that the Ukrainian side is allegedly implementing the aforementioned measures in good faith.

In practice, we are seeing tactics to provoke tensions and a cavalier and blatant violation by the Ukrainian Government of the existing agreements with Donbas on de-escalation. It is obvious that the leadership of the Ukrainian armed forces is not interested in proper monitoring of the observance of the ceasefire. The measures agreed last year provided for the launch of a co-ordination mechanism through the facilitation of the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC) in its current setting. Representatives of the Ukrainian Government and the Donetsk and Luhansk authorities are working in the JCCC in this setting. Incidentally, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) not only confirms in its reports the presence in the disengagement areas of representatives from certain areas of Donbas wearing JCCC symbols, but also maintains contact with them on a practical level.

On 13 October, the Ukrainian Government deliberately escalated the situation by forcibly detaining a representative of Luhansk to the JCCC in its current setting. This occurred inside the disengagement area in Zolote, where Luhansk residents were carrying out demining work (confirmed by the SMM report dated 14 October). Security guarantees had been formally provided by the Ukrainian side for this work to be carried out. Despite this, right under the Mission's nose, a group of armed men in camouflage fatigues entered the disengagement area from territory controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces and effectively kidnapped Andrey Kosyak, a member of the JCCC from Luhansk. They wrapped duct tape around his head and put him in a hole in the ground. Video footage of the incident and its consequences, which clearly shows signs of violence, was published by a Ukrainian war correspondent and is publicly accessible. Let me emphasize once again, a representative of Luhansk to the JCCC in its current setting, whose task it was to monitor observance of the ceasefire during demining work in a disengagement area, is being held.

On the same day, the incident was the subject of discussion at a TCG meeting. According to information provided to the OSCE by the Ukrainian side and heard at that meeting, Kosyak was meant to have been released by the evening of 13 October. However, the Ukrainian Government not only failed to keep its promise, but also decided to arrest the man on the grounds of his alleged participation in an "illegal armed formation". Moreover, in remarks by the Luhansk Regional Prosecutor's Office dated 18 October, it is admitted that the operation to seize the Luhansk man was carried out with the involvement of the Ukrainian intelligence services. There is evidence of pre-planned provocation accompanied by a deliberate violation on the part of the Ukrainian military and security forces of the decision on the disengagement of forces and hardware and also of the ceasefire-strengthening measures. The purpose is obvious, namely to provoke a military escalation at the line of contact.

This incident clearly demonstrates Ukraine's desire to undermine the implementation of the agreements aimed at de-escalation. A dangerous precedent has been set: henceforth, every representative of Donetsk or Luhansk to the JCCC in its current setting can be regarded as a member of an "illegal armed formation" by the Ukrainian side, and their lives are at risk.

Attempts to resolve the situation are complicated by the unwillingness of the representatives of Ukraine to engage in substantive dialogue. An extraordinary meeting of the TCG Working Group on Security Issues that, at the Luhansk authorities' insistence, was convoked for 19 October did not take place owing to the Ukrainian Government's withdrawal of its consent to participate. The Luhansk authorities' request to hold a meeting on 20 October was rejected and ignored altogether.

The absence of any coherent response to what is happening on the part of the OSCE and all its structures involved in helping to resolve the crisis in Ukraine is surprising. There have been no assessments of what has happened nor calls for dialogue by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the TCG, Mikko Kinnunen. The OSCE Chairmanship itself is also silent. We have taken note of the joint press release dated 20 October by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde, and the OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid in support of the SMM. The incident of 13 October that led to the escalation of tensions is mentioned only in passing in the press release. There are no principled assessments of the Ukrainian Government's flagrant violations of the ceasefire-strengthening measures. In Ukraine, this could clearly be perceived as encouragement of the actions taken and an invitation to repeat them.

I should also like to understand what the SMM is doing apart from noting its inability to establish the true circumstances surrounding the incident. Over the past week, we have all seen the wave of public indignation in Donbas when the Mission failed to include information about this outrageous incident in its reports. The SMM's regional team offices in Luhansk and Donetsk were picketed, and the Mission's

forward patrol base in Horlivka also experienced short-term difficulties in its work. There were some obstacles to going out on patrols.

We hope that the latest crisis that has affected the SMM's work will be resolved as soon as possible. We are counting on the Mission to use all available opportunities to "facilitate the dialogue on the ground in order to reduce tensions and promote normalization of the situation", in accordance with the provisions of its mandate. The abducted JCCC member must be released immediately.

We recall time and again the requirement to organize balanced work on both sides of the line of contact so that the local population's confidence in the SMM, our shared international mission in the region, is enhanced rather than called into question. The Mission should develop contacts with the leadership of certain areas of Donbas so as to avoid any misunderstandings and use every opportunity to put an end to the armed violence and provocations by Ukraine. Furthermore, the very presence of monitors on both sides of the line of contact in Donbas is an important stabilizing factor. We are convinced that the SMM's work there should be intensified.

In the meantime, we are seeing how some participating States, first and foremost Ukraine, are trying to switch the SMM's attention to the Ukrainian-Russian border and to force the Mission to deploy all its forces there. That is, to divert its attention from the violations at the line of contact and to "task" it with monitoring the calm situation near the border, where no hostilities are taking place.

The position of Ukraine's external "handlers", who instead of facilitating the implementation of the Minsk agreements continue to promote a paradigm that has nothing to do with them, is also not conducive to a settlement. This was evident, for example, at the European Union-Ukraine Summit on 12 October, and also during the visit of the Secretary of Defense of the United States of America, Lloyd Austin, to Kyiv on 19 October. In both cases, realism in the assessment of what is happening has given way to politicized narratives and fruitless speculations about the parties to the conflict. It is as if the Ukrainian Government is being publicly given carte blanche to continue sabotaging the Minsk agreements and to commit further atrocities in Donbas.

Unfortunately, the aforementioned disturbing trends are just another vivid illustration of the course taken by the current Ukrainian authorities under foreign patronage to disrupt the Minsk process and undermine the OSCE's efforts to resolve the crisis in Ukraine.

We urge that a stand be taken to protect the Minsk agreements and United Nations Security Council resolution 2202, which endorsed the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015. The Ukrainian leadership should stop looking for external enemies, cease provocations that inflame tensions in Donbas, and instead set about fulfilling its specific obligations under the Minsk agreements. This is the only real path to a lasting settlement. The sooner this is understood in Kyiv, the sooner eastern Ukraine will be able to return to a peaceful life.

Thank you for your attention.