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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1307th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

25 March 2021

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

Madam Chairperson,

The process for settling the crisis in Ukraine is simply unable to extricate itself from the impasse into which it has been driven by the Ukrainian Government's reluctance to bring about direct and meaningful dialogue with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk at the Minsk-based Trilateral Contact Group (TCG).

The videoconference of the foreign policy advisers to the leaders of the "Normandy format" countries on 19 March unfortunately did not lead to constructive developments in the attitude of the Ukrainian authorities. What is more, the representative of Ukraine refused to confirm that the Ukrainian Government would unconditionally fulfil, without any exceptions or interpretations, its obligations within the framework of the measures to strengthen the ceasefire that were agreed on with the representatives of Donbas on 22 July 2020 at the TCG. Among other things, this refers to how the official statement of 27 July 2020 by the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine on issuing a ceasefire order needs to be brought into line with the aforementioned measures.

The tragic consequences of the Ukrainian Government's unconstructive approach continue to exact a cost in terms of human lives and the blighted prospects of the residents of Donbas. As reported by the authorities in Donetsk, on 22 March a 71-year-old civilian resident of the settlement of Oleksandrivka died from a gunshot wound. He was simply going about some domestic chores in the courtyard of his house. We expect the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) to study this information as promptly as possible and to reflect it in its reports.

It is not the first time that civilians in this settlement, which is located within "certain areas" of the Donetsk region, have become casualties of targeted fire by the Ukrainian military. According to the SMM report of 16 March, one further resident of Oleksandrivka was injured on 22 February. In order to save his life, amputation of some of his extremities was required. The Mission previously confirmed that on 8 February a taxi driver was killed near the settlement of Bohdanivka (Donetsk region); the Ukrainian military deliberately fired at his vehicle in the territory under their control for having allegedly "entered a

forbidden area”. The passenger travelling inside that civilian car was injured (SMM daily reports of 9 February and 18 March).

It should be stressed that these incidents occurred at a time when the measures to strengthen the ceasefire ought to have been in force – those measures to which the Ukrainian Government stubbornly refuses to commit itself fully. We would draw attention to the fact that representatives of the Ukrainian Government have in the past repeatedly pointed out that the Ukrainian military are not subject to any disciplinary action for violating the ceasefire. This directly contravenes the aforementioned measures.

During recent meetings of the Permanent Council, the Ukrainian delegation has repeatedly argued that the co-ordination mechanism for responding to ceasefire violations cannot be activated fully because Russian officers are not taking part in the work of the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC). I would remind you that the termination of their participation in December 2017 was a forced step that was prompted by the actions of the Ukrainian authorities, who proposed unacceptable working conditions to the Russian officers.

In particular, attempts were made to oblige them to comply with requirements that go against Russian legislation governing the status of military personnel – for example, to provide copious biometric data, to undergo fingerprinting beyond the borders of Russia, and so on. Subsequently the Ukrainian authorities passed laws that have made it legally impossible for Russian officers to remain on Ukrainian territory safely as part of the JCCC. In accordance with the law on the so-called reintegration of Donbas that came into effect on 24 February 2018, Russia was declared an “aggressor State”. However, no special legal regulations for Russian representatives at the JCCC were adopted. In that regard, the current appeals by Ukrainian representatives exhorting Russia to have its officers rejoin the JCCC are merely empty propaganda. With what status and on what basis are they supposed to stay on Ukrainian territory?

Additionally, we would again draw attention to the fact that in accordance with the measures adopted on 22 July 2020 to strengthen the ceasefire, the leadership of the Ukrainian armed forces and the leadership of the armed formations of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions were required to issue orders whereby any response to ceasefire violations was meant to take place with the involvement of the co-ordination mechanism “through the facilitation of the JCCC in its current setting” – that is, in its composition at the time the aforementioned measures were signed. As you know, when the measures were agreed on, the JCCC on both sides of the line of contact was in fact duly made up of representatives of the Ukrainian armed forces and of the armed formations of certain regions of Donbas. This is also confirmed by the regular observations of the SMM.

The representatives of the current Ukrainian leadership continue to categorically reject dialogue with the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk. On 23 March, the adviser to the Ukrainian TCG delegation on information policy, Oleksiy Arestovych, asserted live on the television channel Ukrayina 24 that the Russian Federation had pursued a single goal since 2014, namely “to get us to enter into direct negotiations with quasi-State entities that, on account of some misunderstanding, are referred to as the ‘Luhansk People’s Republic’ and the ‘Donetsk People’s Republic’. We will not agree to that, as we are consistently letting them know.” The question again raises itself: whose authority did the representatives of the Ukrainian Government recognize and confirm in the signed minutes of the TCG meeting of 11 March 2020?

We regard Mr. Arestovych’s pronouncement as yet another confirmation of the Ukrainian authorities’ conscious deviation from the letter and the spirit of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, whose provisions contain clear references to the need for agreement on various aspects of the settlement to be reached between the representatives of the Ukrainian leadership and the authorities in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions through direct dialogue at the TCG. Moreover, such

pronouncements also put a question mark over all other agreements on security developed in previous years as part of the Ukrainian Government's negotiations with the authorities in Donbas.

Madam Chairperson,

Representatives of radical nationalist movements continue to play an appreciable role in internal Ukrainian political life. Despite the Ukrainian leadership's assurances to the contrary, that country's Government continues to plot its course under the pressure of, and frequently also in co-operation with, nationalists. A relevant example is the socio-economic blockade of Donbas that was introduced in 2017 at the request of the Right Sector and other radical movements. The Ukrainian authorities have to the present day continued with this blockade.

The supporters of the idea of Ukrainian national exclusivity continue to get away with their loud antics. In Kyiv on 20 March, during yet another demonstration in front of the building of the Office of the President of Ukraine, aggressive radicals once again presented their conditions to the authorities. In the course of their excesses they smashed the windows of entry doors, scrawled nationalist slogans on the outside walls, drew a swastika and tried to set fire to the building.¹ The law enforcement officers present at the scene did nothing to prevent all this. According to abundant audiovisual evidence and the SMM report of 22 March, the police unsuccessfully tried to intervene only after the building had been damaged; however, they did not arrest the protesters on the spot. Selective actions to establish the identity of those who were involved in this escapade were not initiated until after it was over.

This brings to mind the events that took place in Kyiv on 19 January, when police officers instantly prevented two peaceful gatherings from being held. On that day, people went to the barricades to demand that the authorities cease providing State support, including funding, to nationalist movements and that they investigate attacks by far-right radicals that remain unpunished. More than a dozen participants in the peaceful protest were immediately detained by the police on the spot. A law enforcement officer asserted in front of live television cameras that "the Constitution is currently not functioning" in Ukraine. These events, incidentally, have not been reflected in the SMM's reports.

Finally, a recent interview given to the Ukrainian media outlet Fakty by a certain Roman Zaitsev is most telling, Mr. Zaitsev being by his own admission the executive director of the obnoxious Myrotvorets website. The personal details of those who according to the nationalists pose a threat to the security of Ukraine continue to be posted there. Among these individuals are public figures, opposition politicians, journalists, cultural figures and artists, whose views or pronouncements have proved to be not to the liking of the post-Maidan authorities. By the way, there are quite a few foreigners on that list. Some prominent Ukrainian figures have already fallen victim to premeditated attacks and lost their lives as a result – for example, the writer Oles Buzina and the politician Oleg Kalashnikov. In all, the database contains around 240,000 names, of which some 160,000 are of inhabitants of Ukraine. SMM personnel have, incidentally, also featured there.

It is worth noting the following: in his interview, Mr. Zaitsev made it clear that the Ukrainian security services, the interior and foreign ministries, and the State border guard service had all been involved in the creation of that website. What is more, the website, as he said, currently continues to co-ordinate its work closely with them. Mr. Zaitsev added that the website receives financial and technical support from the representatives of more than 40 countries, including diplomats, military personnel and the staff of foreign intelligence services. By the way, on 11 February, the European Parliament called for this hate-inciting

1 <https://youtu.be/xhJgoqZBujE>; https://youtu.be/Ju2qMpY_1jg.

website, which has existed since 2014, to be shut down. Why, then, do the European Union's representatives remain silent at the OSCE?

We call on the OSCE, notably the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Teresa Ribeiro, to pay the closest attention to these revelations. After all, the lives and safety of journalists are being directly threatened there.

Once again, we note that the crisis in Ukraine is the result of the February 2014 coup d'état, which was orchestrated, funded and organized from abroad and has led to the armed confrontation in Donbas and the wholesale suffering of millions of civilians. We call on the external "minders" of the current Ukrainian authorities to exert as much influence as possible on them so as to induce them to act in the interests of peace and civil accord and to demonstrate their commitment to the OSCE principles not only in words but also in practice. This is important among other things for the swift achievement of peace in eastern Ukraine on the basis of implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015.

Thank you for your attention.