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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1160th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

12 October 2017

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

Mr. Chairperson,

Only through direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk can a comprehensive political settlement be secured in Ukraine and nationwide harmony and reconciliation achieved in the country. The Trilateral Contact Group provides an unparalleled format for such talks, and the only real basis for them is the Minsk Package of Measures, which was signed by the parties to the internal Ukrainian conflict and endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202.

Any attempt to revise or disregard the Minsk agreements is fraught with the loss of prospects for a peaceful political settlement of the conflict and further degradation of Ukraine's sovereignty. The Ukrainian Government has put political talks in the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format on the back burner, sabotaging the agreements reached at the highest level, and continues to take dangerous unilateral measures, which are undermining the Minsk process and depriving Donetsk and Luhansk of any motivation for peacemaking.

In particular, the Ukrainian Government has legalized the transport blockade of Donbas, which forced the regional authorities to adopt urgent measures to alleviate the negative consequences of this step for the population of the region.

Last Friday saw the adoption of a law to extend the temporary procedure for local self-government in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions for one year, with the proviso that the special status of Donbas will be granted only if a number of requirements imposed by the Ukrainian Government are met rather than the Minsk agreements. Likewise, the draft law on the so-called reintegration of Donbas, which the Verkhovna Rada approved at its first reading, contravenes the Minsk Package of Measures, contains unacceptable wording grossly distorting reality, stokes militaristic sentiments and strengthens the radicalization of Ukrainian society under slogans for countering the imaginary aggression.

The whole world can see how debating and voting proceeds in the Verkhovna Rada – with the blocking of the speaker’s podium, smoke bombs and raging crowds outside the Parliament building. However, this is only stage set. The authorities in Kyiv have all the necessary means to adopt the laws required by the Minsk Package of Measures. What is lacking is the political will and international pressure.

There have been many such destructive steps. The Law on Education infringes upon the rights of the non-Ukrainian-speaking population, by restricting their access to higher education and condemning them to emigration or a lower social standing. This amounts to a gross violation of the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education.

An expert council has started working within the framework of the Law on Restricting Access of Foreign Printed Materials with Anti-Ukrainian Content to the Ukrainian Market and has already introduced restrictions against 13 Russian publications, including the Encyclopaedia for Schoolchildren, under the pretext of combating “the propaganda of imperial doctrines”. The possibility of introducing excise duty on the sale of Russian books is being discussed.

A law on tours and performances by Russian artists in Ukraine, which would require them to be screened by the Ukrainian Security Service, is ready for signing. A draft law banning trips to Russia by all government officials, except for diplomats (whom Oleksandr Turchynov has branded as spies), has been submitted. It would seem that this is no longer a political matter but a medical one.

The silence on the part of the OSCE executive structures in this connection raises questions about their professionalism, impartiality and objectivity.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian security forces continue their indiscriminate shelling of Donbas, killing civilians and destroying civilian infrastructure. Last week, the Ukrainian military admitted to OSCE monitors that they shot a man as he was crossing a bridge near Shchastia on 6 September. On 3 October, a Russian officer from the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC) and members of the SMM came under fire from Ukrainian armed forces at the Zaichenko-Kominternove crossroads. Two 82-mm mines exploded in direct proximity to them. According to SMM data, several houses were damaged during the shelling of Dokuchaievsk on 6 October from the direction where the Ukrainian armed forces are deployed. On 8 October, a civilian was killed, and a house and power transmission line damaged in Zaitseve as a result of shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces. On 10 October, Ukrainian security forces shelled the Dokuchaievsk oil refinery, damaging storage tanks, which created a risk of chemical pollution in the area.

Under these conditions, it is important for the SMM to focus its efforts on the line of contact, where their activity can help to prevent a new spiral of tension. We also consider it necessary for the SMM to monitor more closely, by means of technical equipment, the Ukrainian armed forces deployed at the rear. So far, judging by the reports, they either do not monitor these areas or do not report their findings.

Emergency measures must be taken to de-escalate tension, bring about a ceasefire and disengage the parties’ forces and hardware. Complete ceasefires lasting seven days have been observed in the Stanytsia Luhanska disengagement area on more than ten occasions, but the Ukrainian armed forces ignore their obligations. On 9 October, the SMM reported that the

militia gave the signal to begin the withdrawal of forces in Stanytsia Luhanska. The monitors in territory controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces saw the signal, but the security forces did not respond.

It is necessary to move from military to civilian logic and redouble the efforts to alleviate the situation of the civilians of Donbas as winter approaches.

However, the authorities in Kyiv are more concerned about saving the so-called defenders of Ukraine from justice, as stated by Iryna Lutsenko, the representative of the President of Ukraine, on Espresso television, when commenting on the draft law on the reintegration of Donbas. In fact, the criminal nature of the punitive operation launched in April 2014 by the armed forces and gangs of volunteers is recognized. The humanitarian law violations and crimes committed during this operation have been duly recorded. Obviously, they are afraid of just retribution. However, the Minsk agreements provide for the release of detained persons and for mechanisms prohibiting prosecution in connection with the events that took place in the region.

In the light of this, can we expect the authorities to complete the investigations into the burning of people at Trade Union House in Odessa in 2014, into the case of the Maidan snipers and into the murder of journalists? A case in point is the recent arrest of Yevgeniy Mefedov and Serhiy Dolzhenkov, who spent around three years in detention on charges that later collapsed. They were accused of organizing riots in Odessa.

In conclusion, I should remind you once again that the Minsk agreements do not signify the capitulation of Ukraine, as the nationalists are trying to suggest, but rather a way to restore peace and preserve the integrity of Ukraine. These goals can only be achieved through the simultaneous implementation of the political and military provisions. However, Ukraine is also persistently breaking this agreement, which was reached at the Berlin Summit of the Normandy Quartet in October 2016.

As for the talk about transferring control of the border to the Ukrainian Government, the conditions for this are listed in the Minsk Package of Measures. There is no other option.