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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE  
TRILATERAL CONTACT GROUP, AT THE 2020 ANNUAL SECURITY  
REVIEW CONFERENCE**

23 June 2020

**Special session: Ensuring security and stability in the OSCE region in light of  
developments with respect to Ukraine**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Distinguished colleagues,

The year that has elapsed since the last Annual Security Review Conference has seen many events that have had a direct bearing on the situation in Ukraine.

First of all, there was a change of power in the country as a result of the presidential and parliamentary elections. The reins of government passed to a new leadership, which promised to change the situation for the better and, above all, to end the conflict in Donbas.

The first steps taken by the new authorities in Kyiv in that direction gave some cause for optimism. The decisions of the Normandy format summits in Paris (2015) and Berlin (2016) on the disengagement of forces and hardware in three “pilot” areas along the line of contact and on the formalization in writing of the “Steinmeier formula” were finally implemented. This made it possible to hold the next Normandy Four summit in Paris in December 2019 and to agree on specific steps to advance an internal Ukrainian settlement.

This positive momentum also made it possible to reach agreements within the Political Working Group of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) on the establishment of an Advisory Board of civil society representatives to prepare proposals on draft political and legal decisions on the settlement of the conflict in line with the Minsk Package of Measures, notably on the holding of elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The latter initiative had the potential to give fresh impetus to the political efforts for a settlement, and to contribute to the creation of a positive atmosphere between the parties to the conflict and to the stabilization of the situation in the armed confrontation zone as a whole.

In addition, the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk then set about the development of a road map, found common ground as regards the disengagement of forces and the exchange

of detainees, and agreed to formalize TCG decisions in the written minutes of the meetings. This once again confirms that genuine progress can be made in the settlement process if there is the political will to do so.

Unfortunately, the advances observed in the Minsk process and the positive momentum in general were reduced to zero by Ukraine, and to all appearances not without external prompting. As a result, the work on a settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis has once again come to a standstill. Of the seven decisions from the Paris summit, only the instruction concerning the exchange of detainees according to the principle of “all identified for all identified” can be considered to have been nominally implemented to date. No results whatsoever have been forthcoming on the remaining decisions, namely on a ceasefire; the disengagement of forces; demining; the simultaneous opening of new entry/exit checkpoints; reaching agreement on the legal aspects of a special status for Donbas; and the incorporation of the “Steinmeier formula” into Ukrainian legislation.

The initiative to establish an Advisory Board has effectively been scuttled by the Ukrainian side. The meeting of 11 March 2020 resulted in no more than the signing of one set of written minutes.

The TCG meetings that have taken place over the past three months, including today’s meetings of the working groups, testify to the Ukrainian Government’s desire to filibuster the implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures and to impose its own logic for a settlement, which has nothing to do with the commitments undertaken by Ukraine in Minsk.

What is more, there is a manifest striving by the authorities in Kyiv to edge out the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk from the negotiation process by bringing in some temporarily displaced refugees from Donbas to take part in the process and replacing its real agenda with a false narrative that the conflict resolution is to be negotiated exclusively with Russia. In that context, I should like to underscore that Russia is not a party to the conflict and performs exclusively mediation functions in the TCG.

Against the backdrop of the statements heard more and more frequently in Kyiv about the “uselessness” of the Minsk agreements, such approaches demonstrate Ukraine’s persistent reluctance to follow the letter and spirit of the Minsk Package of Measures. In that same vein, attempts are being made to call into question the mandatory implementation of its provisions, which were endorsed by a resolution of the United Nations Security Council. All this also nullifies the jointly agreed outcomes of the Normandy format summit in Paris, all the participants of which, including President Zelenskyi, unanimously confirmed the importance of the Minsk agreements as the only framework for a settlement of the conflict in Donbas.

The Ukrainian Government is trying to conceal its efforts to sabotage the implementation of the Minsk agreements with perfunctory measures: increasing the level of representation of its delegation at the negotiations, its readiness to work round the clock, and so on and so forth, which given the absence of political will does not yield any results.

Owing to the Ukrainian Government’s position, which runs contrary to the logic of the provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures, the entire political settlement package has been faltering for more than five years now. Only quite recently did the Ukrainian side at long last begin to submit written documents concerning the political aspects of overcoming the conflict.

The security situation remains extremely tense. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) has recorded a significant number of violations of the ceasefire regime. Civilian infrastructure is being targeted, and civilians are again being injured and killed.

The SMM data are highly revealing as to who is violating the ceasefire more frequently. During the period from 3 January to 5 June 2020, a total of 119,788 violations of the ceasefire regime were recorded, mostly on the part of the Ukrainian armed forces: 17,548 violations, compared with 11,509 violations on the part of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. A total of 30 settlements have suffered damage in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, whereas it was only six settlements in territories controlled by the Ukrainian Government. Thirty-five people have been injured and four killed in the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics while on the Ukrainian side these figures were four and one respectively. According to information from the SMM, in May alone, 11 residents of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions were injured, while according to data provided by the people of Donbas themselves, 27 people had been injured, including 5 children. In this connection, the Ukrainian side refuses to agree on a signed declaration on compliance with the ceasefire regime, consistently striking out in the relevant drafts the provisions concerning a ban on intelligence and sabotage operations, and sniper and retaliatory fire. It refuses to promulgate orders on complying with the ceasefire regime or to establish direct co-operation with the opposing side in the event of armed incidents.

At the same time, the proposals by the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk to adopt jointly with the Ukrainian Government a binding decision on the observance of additional measures to ensure a "silence regime", and on extending the practice of the disengagement of the parties' forces and hardware along the entire length of the line of contact are not receiving a proper response from the Ukrainian side. There has been no headway either on agreeing on three additional disengagement areas because of the Ukrainian Government's persistent reluctance to submit compromise options that would be acceptable to the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk.

The picture is no less bleak from a humanitarian angle. There is no prospect of an exchange in sight. Since the exchanges carried out on 27 December 2019 and 16 April 2020, the Ukrainian side, unlike the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk, has so far declined to submit its proposals for a further exchange according to the principle of "all identified for all identified". Only this week were relevant lists exchanged. However, the lists submitted by the Ukrainian side, as noted by the representatives of the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk, raise more questions than they answer.

For two months, an agreement on the simultaneous opening of new entry/exit checkpoints in the settlements of Zolote and Shchastia has been blocked because of Ukraine's refusal to provide security guarantees for the start of preparatory work in Shchastia. In that connection, during today's meeting, Ukraine finally expressed its readiness to provide security guarantees for the start of preparatory work in that settlement, but only for one month rather than four, as would be required to carry out all the work to create the necessary infrastructure on the Luhansk side. Even so, better late than never.

There has been no progress either on the socio-economic provisions of the Minsk agreements, including those covering pension payments to Donbas residents.

As a conscientious mediator, Russia takes a responsible attitude to the implementation by the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of the provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures and the Paris summit recommendations. We do our best to work actively with all parties, including the OSCE. However, the key to the settlement of the conflict in south-eastern Ukraine lies in the hands of the Ukrainians themselves. It is important that the parties to the conflict – the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk – through direct dialogue seek points of convergence and move towards a common denominator in the search for solutions to existing problems. Russia is ready to continue to assist them along this path.

The sooner the Ukrainian Government starts to fulfil its obligations under the Minsk agreements fully and consistently – in the spirit of the most recent positive steps – the sooner the long-awaited peace will come to Ukraine.

In the concluding part of my statement, I should like to make a few comments in connection with what we have heard during the discussion. First of all, I would point out that within the TCG we endeavour to use the “language of the Minsk agreements”, avoiding such terms as “aggression” and “occupation”. It would be good if we could follow a similar approach at OSCE events too.

As for the restricted access of the SMM monitors to Donetsk and Luhansk in connection with the coronavirus epidemic, the Mission is refusing to engage in direct dialogue on this matter with the authorities of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In our view, these restrictions are justified and, in many respects, are less strict than the restrictions in force in other countries.

I should like to thank the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ms. Heidi Grau, and the Chief Monitor of the SMM, Mr. Yaşar Halit Çevik, for their efforts to find ways to settle the conflict.

I wish the participants a successful Conference.

Thank you for your attention.