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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1116th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 October 2016

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We take a positive view of the meeting held last week in Berlin of the leaders of the Normandy format countries. It enabled them to synchronize their watches regarding the Ukrainian crisis and outline further steps for its peaceful settlement on the basis of the Minsk Package of Measures – in its entirety and in the sequence that was established in Minsk and at the previous Normandy format summit in Paris. This also concerns the well-known “Steinmeier formula” on the procedure for the entry into force of the law on the special status of certain areas of Donbas. It was confirmed that the Minsk agreements remain the only basis for a political solution of the crisis. We supported the idea of drawing up a clear road map for further steps. We trust that tangible results will already be achieved at the next meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group, which is scheduled for 9 November.

Unfortunately, on the ground, the Ukrainian Government continues to avoid implementing its commitments in good faith. Its attempts to shift the blame for violations of the ceasefire regime in Donbas on to the people’s militia in Donetsk and Luhansk are untenable.

We can see from the reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) that the scale of the shelling is increasing once again. Between 10 and 25 October, the monitors recorded over 6,000 violations of the ceasefire regime. An SMM camera in Shyrokyne recorded that the escalation of tension in the southern part of the Donetsk region was preceded by several days of intensive firing from west to east, in other words shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces, to which the militia did not initially respond. As a result of the indiscriminate use of weapons by the Ukrainian security forces, civilians were wounded in Donetsk, Staromykhailivka, Kruta Balka, Zaichenko and Raivka, a woman was killed in Sakhanka, and houses and civilian infrastructure were damaged in Sakhanka, Pervomaisk, Kominternove, Yasynuvata, Zaitseve, Leninske, Oleksandrivka, Vasylivka and Kalynove-Borshchuvate.

We are still awaiting a consolidated report by the SMM on the shelling of residential districts and infrastructure, beginning with bombardment of Donetsk, Luhansk and Sloviansk.

We note a systematic build-up of forces, equipment and weapons of the Ukrainian armed forces in areas close to the line of contact. Between 10 and 25 October, the SMM recorded 124 pieces of artillery belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces and 12 tanks in violation of the Package of Measures and its Addendum. In addition, the monitors discovered around 200 Ukrainian armoured personnel carriers in the security zone. Ukrainian equipment is being brought up from the rear, including via the railway station at Rubizhne, and this has nothing to do with rotation. Over the past two weeks, the monitors have counted 377 units of Ukrainian military equipment, primarily artillery and multiple-launch rocket systems, just beyond the boundaries of the withdrawal line.

There have been repeated attempts to occupy additional areas of the so-called grey zone to the south of Donetsk. In violation of the Minsk agreements, the Ukrainian armed forces are using aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The SMM recorded aircraft taking off from a military airfield in Kramatorsk and the launch of a UAV by Ukrainian soldiers in Shchastia.

We welcome the heightened activity of the SMM monitors, particularly in the security zone. We understand that not everyone likes this – over the past week, the majority of the obstacles to the freedom of movement of SMM patrols came from the Ukrainian armed forces (SMM report for 26 October). For some reason, the Western countries did not want to draw attention to this.

The implementation of the Minsk agreements – the President of Ukraine, Mr. Petro Poroshenko, also spoke in Berlin of the lack of alternative to this – will require real efforts and political will, and there are clearly problems with this. The option of military subjugation of Donbas is not only not ruled out in Kyiv, but it also has its powerful supporters. There is one more option – do nothing, sabotage the real work and if there is any movement forwards, then at a snail's pace.

This is the variant we have been observing for one and a half years now. Even the process of the disengagement of the parties in the three agreed areas is being artificially delayed. The militia of the Luhansk People's Republic have demined the road leading to Zolote, as requested by the SMM. The Ukrainian Government, however, is not taking similar steps. Every day, the forces of the people's militia in Luhansk report their readiness to withdraw their forces from Stanytsia Luhanska. Ukraine is using any pretext to avoid this.

Once a week, the SMM reports isolated explosions in the disengagement area in Stanytsia Luhanska. Who is violating the ceasefire regime there and why according to such a schedule? One might ask who benefits from this. Who protested against the agreement on the disengagement of forces? The nationalists from Azov and Right Sector, as has also been reported by the SMM. Are their fighters near Stanytsia Luhanska? Clearly, they are.

The same thing is happening with the ceasefire regime along the entire line of contact. If it is to become comprehensive and stable, if the process of the withdrawal of weapons is to begin, then the Ukrainian Government needs to begin to implement the political aspects of the Package of Measures.

It seems that what we are seeing here is the tactic of one step forward and two steps back. A law on the special status that meets the requirements of the Package of Measures for the most part has been prepared, but then amendments that destroy the sense of this law are introduced. There is also a law on amnesty, but its entry into force has been blocked. And it is pointless to talk about constitutional reform.

There is an urgent need to do something about the humanitarian situation in Donbas. At the last meeting, we supported the call to speed up the opening of additional crossing points along the line of contact. However, we see that Ukraine is making it as difficult as possible for people to cross through its entry points. The SMM reports queues of up to 2,000 people backed up at crossing points such as Stanytsia Luhanska.

Improving the life of the residents of Donbas, especially as winter approaches, cannot be ensured by opening just a single crossing point at Zolote or some other place. It is necessary to completely lift the humanitarian blockade of the region and remember the social obligations of the central government to the inhabitants of Donbas. Lastly, the current crossing regime at the line of contact is a source of income from corruption for the Ukrainian security forces, the Ukrainian Security Service, the Ukrainian armed forces and the nationalist battalions. Yet, our Western colleagues claim that combating corruption is one of the priorities in Ukraine.

Today, more than 400 tonnes of food, medicines and firefighting equipment are being provided by Russian convoys for the population of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. When the international mechanism for the delivery of humanitarian assistance provided for in point 7 of the Package of Measures is introduced, it will be used. But we will have to wait until the end of time for Ukrainian Government to do this, and the population is in urgent need of assistance right now. We should like to take this opportunity to thank those colleagues who are involved in providing humanitarian aid to Donetsk and Luhansk.

In conclusion, I should like to point out that it is impossible to keep on accusing Russia in order to justify Ukraine's failures and misfortunes. The ban on many Russian television channels and on the use of the Russian language at airports and on public transport, the restrictions on the import of Russian-language literature, and the ban on the use of Russian payment systems, which are used by millions of Ukrainians working in Russia do nothing to help restore peace and harmony to Ukraine. Implementing the Minsk agreements as soon as possible will help.

Thank you for your attention.