

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1175th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 February 2018

**In response to the reports by Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special  
Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, and the  
Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and  
in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Martin Sajdik**

Ambassadors Martin Sajdik and Ertuğrul Apakan,

Your work aims to bring peace and harmony to Ukraine. We value this and we wish you success. A key condition for achieving this is full implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures. On 12 February, this cornerstone document, which was endorsed by the United Nations Security Council, will mark its third anniversary. Not one of its points has been implemented to date. Objective analysis shows who is to blame for this situation.

As we know, the conflict in south-eastern Ukraine began with the Ukrainian Government's punitive operation against its own citizens, which has brought the region's people untold suffering. Many were forced to flee, including to Russia. Since 1 April 2014, around 1.7 million Ukrainian citizens have turned to the Russian authorities to receive legal status – Russian citizenship, refugee status, temporary asylum, temporary residence permit, and so on. Even more Ukrainians regularly go to Russia to work. The authorities come up with propaganda labels such as “aggressor country”, but people are voting with their feet.

Attempts to portray Russia as a party to the internal conflict in Ukraine are an integral part of a policy to sabotage the Minsk agreements, draw out the conflict, preserve hotbeds of tension on the borders with the European Union and Russia, and create competitive advantages for outside players, and all at the expense of the peoples of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian Government completely ignores the political part of its commitments. The law on a special status for Donbas has not been passed on the pretext of conditions that were not foreseen in the Package of Measures. The Ukrainian Government is obliged to settle the modalities for holding local elections with Donetsk and Luhansk, but this is not happening. There is not even any discussion of the Steinmeier formula, which links these two key issues.

Neither has there been any movement on a law that would prohibit prosecution in connection with the events in Donbas. The Ukrainian Government is openly playing tricks with the list of detainees due for exchange and is not taking the required legal steps to properly clear the names of those released. We have heard nothing in a long time about the constitutional reform foreseen under Point 11 of the Minsk Package of Measures.

Shelling of populated areas in Donbas continues in violation of Point 1 of the Package of Measures. Some of these incidents are reported by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM). The latest incidents, which caused civilian casualties, were the shelling of a civilian bus in Olenivka on 21 January and apartment blocks in Dokuchaievsk on 22 January. The ongoing build-up of Ukrainian Government forces and hardware is a worrying development. We see a continuing increase in Ukrainian large-calibre artillery along the line of contact in violation of the Package of Measures – 57 pieces were counted last week. Poorly controlled groups of nationalist fighters continue to operate in Donbas. The Ukrainian Government has yet to publish orders on a ceasefire.

The Ukrainian Government is also not implementing the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) decision of 21 September 2016 on disengagement of forces and hardware, which is one of the key elements for de-escalation on the line of contact. The Ukrainian authorities also refuse to fulfil the commitments they made in Stanytsia Luhanska, where the SMM has recorded seven-day full ceasefire periods at least 20 times.

The Ukrainian armed forces continue to resort to provocations, taking villages in the “grey zone” along the line of contact, such as Novooleksandrivka, Hladosove and Travneve. This is bringing the two sides’ positions dangerously close together and raising the risk of escalation.

The Ukrainian Government consistently avoids engaging in direct efforts to agree upon measures for settling the crisis with the other party to the conflict – Donetsk and Luhansk, despite the fact that this is one of the provisions clearly set out in the Package of Measures. It was for this purpose that we established the TCG, in which Ukraine was represented by all parties to the conflict. We hope that Ambassador Sajdik will succeed in the key task of getting all of the parties engaged in productive dialogue.

The economic and humanitarian situation looks bleak. The central government and the radicals are doing all they can to further isolate Donbas from the rest of Ukraine. It has become extremely difficult to receive social benefit payments (in direct violation of Point 8 of the Minsk Package of Measures). The authorities have imposed a trade and transport blockade and periodically test cutting the region off from water and electricity supplies, and now from Ukrainian mobile telecommunications services too.

Instead of fulfilling its obligations, the Ukrainian Government has elaborated a draft law on “reintegration”, which runs counter to the Package of Measures.

The Ukrainian Government’s destructive attitude has made it impossible for Russian officers to continue their work in the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination. The SMM must work directly with representatives of the local authorities in Donbas.

Mr. Chairperson,

The SMM reports show that the monitors make regular visits to the border areas. They should pay greater attention to the Ukrainian armed forces' rear, where an arms build-up is taking place. Many government-controlled areas are closed to the SMM on the pretext of mine hazards. That this is a deliberate tactic by the Ukrainian Government to hide things from the monitors was confirmed by the incident on 31 January, when a "mine hazard" sign was hung on the gate of a Ukrainian armed forces military facility. The statistics on restrictions of the SMM's work pass this aspect over in silence, which looks like manipulation of the facts in the interests of one party to the conflict. Meanwhile, Ukrainian Government forces twice shot at an SMM unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) last week, and an SMM patrol came under fire near Yasynuvata on 2 February.

The SMM must act objectively, transparently and in an unbiased fashion, and this depends very much on you, Mr. Apakan.

The deterrent effect the monitors' presence is having along the line of contact cannot be emphasized enough. We support plans to intensify monitoring work in this key area, including with the help of technical equipment. The SMM plays an important part in early warning of military escalation, especially now, with reports emerging that the Ukrainian military leadership has plans for an offensive.

There is a clear link between the political situation in Ukraine and the conflict in Donbas. The Ukrainian Government has repeatedly used the tactic of escalation in Donbas and ramping up the empty rhetoric to divert attention from problems on the domestic front, including economic problems.

Radical Ukrainian nationalism is one of the instruments most actively used by the "war party". We expect the SMM to pay closer attention to developments in Ukraine's social and political life beyond the conflict zone too.

The situation with the Russian language and national minority languages requires constant monitoring. As we know, this issue, along with the policy on historical memory in Ukraine, was one of the key factors that sparked the crisis in 2014.

Particular attention should be given to the law on education, which directly violates Point 11 of the Minsk Package of Measures, and to the regulatory acts on television and radio broadcasting, performances by cultural figures, and print and audio materials (Ukraine has again banned a number of books, including children's books). The SMM should react promptly to persecution of journalists in Ukraine – it seems that the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media does not always have the time to do so. We recall that the chief editor of the Internet publication Strana.ua Igor Guzhva has sought asylum in Austria. The Ukrainian authorities now threaten him with imprisonment.

In accordance with its mandate (Point 3), the SMM should report on violations of the rights of national minorities in Ukraine.

The current Ukrainian Government's reliance on using non-systemic nationalist groups to help resolve issues of concern to Ukrainian society through public gatherings and demonstrations, and the radicals' demands to take part in law enforcement work, including by

using methods punishable by criminal law such as the use of force against opponents, creates a tense atmosphere in the country. In this respect, one cannot help thinking of Germany in the 1930s.

The SMM should pay particularly close attention to the activities of neo-Nazi movements such as the so-called “national militias”, composed of people from the Azov battalion, followers of Stepan Bandera, and the nationalist organizations responsible for crimes against humanity during and after the Great Patriotic War.

Members of other nationalities living in Ukraine are suffering increasingly from these radical nationalists’ actions. On 4 February in Uzhgorod, for example, radicals attempted to set fire to a building belonging to the Hungarian Trans-Carpathian Society.

Nationalist forces continue their attempts to give the conflict a religious dimension. On 3 February, they burned down the Church of St. Vladimir in Lviv. On 25 January, they attempted to burn the Desyatynna Monastery in Kyiv, and on 3 February, they organized a show of force outside this church, where a service was taking place.

Displays of neo-Nazism, fascism, radical nationalism, xenophobia and religious intolerance have become commonplace in Ukraine today and require a consistent and concerted effort by the international community to counter this highly dangerous trend. The radicals are jeopardizing not just stability in Ukraine itself and the prospects for a political settlement in Donbas, but also peace and security in Europe.

Distinguished Ambassadors, let me conclude by wishing you success, steadfast spirit, and good health.

Thank you for your attention.