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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1244th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 October 2019

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The process of resolving the crisis in Ukraine quickly lost the momentum that was only just emerging following the presidential and parliamentary elections. It appears that the new leadership, elected under the slogans of wanting to implement the Minsk agreements and end the war, has decided to put the entire settlement process on hold. Instead of taking real steps towards peace, they are issuing ultimatums in Kyiv that only delay the prospect of resolving the crisis. We note with alarm how the rhetoric in Ukraine is changing from a willingness to “follow the provisions of all the Minsk agreements to achieve peace at last” (Volodymyr Zelenskyi) to unilateral actions on which there is no agreement.

All this is having a negative effect on the situation at the line of contact. The disengagement of forces and hardware in Petrivske and Zolote, on which the Ukrainian Government and the authorities of Donetsk and Luhansk reached an agreement in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) on 1 October, has still not been carried out. The observations of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) over the past week provide a clear answer as to why this has not happened. I would remind you that the Mission confirmed receipt of notifications from the militia with initial information on their positions and their readiness to begin disengagement. No such notification was ever received from the Ukrainian side. The SMM confirmed the repeated launch by the militia on 9, 10 and 11 October of flares signalling their readiness for disengagement in both areas. In the presence of Mission staff, the representatives of the Ukrainian armed forces ignored these signals. The SMM concluded: “Since there was no reciprocal action, the activities related to withdrawal of forces and hardware did not commence.”

Furthermore, according to the Mission, the Ukrainian military increased its presence in the disengagement area by means of equipment and personnel. For example, engineering equipment (several excavators and a BAT-2 combat engineering vehicle) has been hard at work in Zolote since 7 October, and fortifications are being created. New trenches have been dug inside the disengagement area near its northern edge, reinforced barriers have been erected and new mines laid. The number of ceasefire violations has increased dramatically in Petrivske, and the presence of Ukrainian military personnel and equipment is not conducive to de-escalation either.

All this is happening against the backdrop of the Ukrainian radicals' antics, like the actions of the Azov battalion to disrupt the disengagement in Zolote. This is likely to exacerbate the situation along the entire line of contact. The disinclination or unwillingness of the Ukrainian authorities to deal with the nationalists calls into question their ability to guarantee the implementation of the agreements reached in the TCG.

The TCG meeting on 15 October was significant in many respects. During the meeting, the Ukrainian representative made further progress in the settlement dependent on a set of requirements well known since Petro Poroshenko's time, which are not in line with the provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures. As for disengagement in Petrivske and Zolote, it has been made subject to new conditions regarding compliance with a one-week period of "complete silence" along the entire line of contact. It is important to understand, however, that with regard to these areas we are not talking about an initial disengagement, but about addressing violations following the disengagement that occurred there in 2016. Attempts to distort the essence of the existing agreements and depart from the agreed procedures are unacceptable.

The example of Stanytsia Luhanska shows that political will alone is the key to practical results. Over the past three years, more than 60 seven-day periods of "complete silence" confirmed by the SMM were recorded inside that area. The militia launched signal flares dozens of times to indicate their readiness to disengage. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian armed forces did not proceed with disengagement until the Ukrainian Government demonstrated the political will. It is precisely this political will that is needed now in Petrivske and Zolote.

The Ukrainian leadership's inaction is also leading to a stalemate over the political aspects of a settlement. The previous authorities failed to implement completely a single political commitment provided for in the Package of Measures. The special status of Donbas has not been enshrined in legislation on a permanent basis, constitutional reform with new elements on decentralization has not been carried out, procedures for local elections have not been agreed with the authorities of Donetsk and Luhansk, and amnesty issues have not been resolved. Having taken up the baton, the new Ukrainian authorities seem to be operating according to the principle of one step forward and two steps back. First, they agree on the "Steinmeier formula", and then they declare that they will decide the future of Donbas without taking into account the opinion of its representatives. We see how, under pressure from the radicals, the authorities in Kyiv are beginning to invent additional conditions in order to ultimately avoid implementing this formula.

The snowball effect caused by all the new conditions being put forward by the Ukrainian Government after an agreement has been already reached and decisions taken makes further progress in overcoming the crisis in Ukraine extremely difficult. Under these conditions the shelling in Donbas has increased. The sabotage of disengagement in Petrivske and Zolote prevents agreements from being reached on disengagement along the entire line of contact. As recent incidents have shown, civilians, including children, continue to suffer as a result of the persisting threat of mines.

Against the backdrop of the lack of progress, the rhetoric of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Vadym Prystaiko, is surprising. He has repeatedly emphasized in recent days that Ukraine "is making maybe the last attempt to follow the Minsk path. If it does not work, we will have to look to some plan B."

I want to make it clear: there can be no plan B. Through United Nations Security Council resolution 2202, the international community has recognized the Package of Measures as the only basis for resolving the crisis in Ukraine. The only alternative is fresh bloodshed. We sincerely hope that the Ukrainian authorities do not seriously consider such a development. The Ukrainian Government must finally realize

that the implementation of the Package of Measures does not mean capitulation for Ukraine, but a way to achieve a viable settlement and a chance for a peaceful future.

All this foot-dragging is having a negative impact on the humanitarian situation in the region and hitting the most defenceless and vulnerable segments of society. In these conditions, Russia continues to provide humanitarian aid to the population of Donbas. By the end of the year, several humanitarian convoys with children's products weighing some 4,700 tonnes will have been sent to the residents of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, on which the Ukrainian Government continues to impose a socio-economic and transport blockade.

Mr. Chairperson,

On 14 October, "Defender of Ukraine Day" was celebrated in the country. At the previous authorities' behest, this date is celebrated on the anniversary of the establishment of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. Its members are known for the atrocities they committed against the civilian population of various nationalities – Jews, Poles, Russians, Belorussians and Ukrainians – during the Second World War. However, it was on this day that neo-Nazi marches took place in major Ukrainian cities under slogans inciting inter-ethnic hatred. Instead of the "Steinmeier formula", the public were offered the "Bandera formula" full of hatred for dissent.

It is significant that the day before, the Prime Minister of Ukraine, Oleksiy Honcharuk, attended a concert by bands that openly promote the ideology of neo-Nazism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia. According to the organizers, the event was supported by the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs of Ukraine. The Ukrainian Jewish Committee expressed its concern about the Prime Minister's participation in this abhorrent event. All this not only created the wrong background for the negotiations in the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk, but was also clearly not conducive to increasing sympathy among the inhabitants of Donbas towards the Ukrainian Government. Meanwhile, Ukraine's Western mentors stubbornly pretend not to notice the rampant neo-Nazism there. There is no clear response from the relevant OSCE structures either. We urge the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to provide an objective assessment of this matter. A thematic report on this topic is also long overdue from the SMM.

Thank you for your attention.