



**Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine
at the 781-st FSC Plenary Meeting
(25 February 2015 at 10.00, Hofburg)**

Mr. Chairman,

Ukraine strictly adheres to the implementation of the Minsk agreements of 5 and 19 September 2014 and the “Package of measures”, signed by the Trilateral Contact group and representatives of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts on 12 February as they remain a roadmap for peaceful resolution in Donbas. Regrettably other signatories, including Russia and its proxies from the so-called “Donetsk people’s republic” and “Luhansk people’s republic” appear again to choose continuation of hostilities in Ukraine’s east.

The Russian Federation until now disregards its obligations under the Minsk agreements and continues to impede the peace process which destroys the credibility of its statements and declarations. Militants’ offensive on Debaltseve, supported by Russia, constitutes a flagrant violation of the cease-fire agreements, reached on 12 February in Minsk in the “Normandy Format” and in the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group. The attempts by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to visit Debaltseve with the aim to observe the ceasefire regime had been blocked by the terrorist groups. The Ukrainian forces had to withdraw to prevent further human losses. The residential area of Debaltseve was severely destroyed by constant intensive shellings by the militants.

For the last 10 days there were offensive attempts and shellings registered along other sections of the line of contact, in particular in the vicinity of Mariupol. The signing of the Minsk package of 12 February did not stop the continuous inflow of Russian weaponry and manpower from across the border. We condemn the regular attempts of the pro-Russian subversive agents to spread the area of fear and destabilize the situation in other cities of Ukraine’s east by staging terrorist acts.

Violations of the Minsk agreements by the Russian Federation and Russia-backed militants require adequate response of the international community to prevent further erosion of the peace process. We must not allow this opportunity for peace slip. The plan on withdrawal of heavy weapons was agreed on 21 February and signed by Ukraine, Russia and representatives of the so called DPR and LPR.

Paragraph 1 of the document clearly states that the withdrawal will start after the ceasefire regime is strictly observed. The new positions for the withdrawal of the Ukrainian heavy weapons have been prepared. We are awaiting for implementation by Russia and the militants of their commitments. It is also must be allowed full unhindered access to all areas for monitoring and verification.

Mr. Chairman,

A notable positive step towards the fulfillment of the Minsk agreements is the recent exchange of prisoners and hostages in Donbas. The last such exchange took place on 21 February near Luhansk. Most of the freed prisoners were captured in the area of Debaltseve last week. Among the freed Ukrainian servicemen were also those who spent six months in the captivity - the soldiers who defended Ilovaisk and “cyborgs” from the

Donetsk airport. However, despite the agreement to proceed with the release based on the principle "all for all" today many Ukrainian civilians and soldiers still remain in captivity, also on the territory of the Russian Federation. We urge their immediate release.

Distinguished colleagues,

Since the establishment of the ceasefire regime on 15 February 2015, **302** cases of attacks on positions of the ATO forces and settlements have been registered.

Let me bring to your attention some facts of continuous attacks by the pro-Russian militants in the period of 19-24 February:

-on 19 February despite the relative calm the complete ceasefire on the territory of Donbas did not happen. During the day 2 Ukrainian military were killed, 3 wounded;

-on 20 February near the settlements of Popasna and Troitske heavy artillery attacks continued, attacks by militants were also undertaken near the village of Krymske (Luhansk region). Also, on 20 February a military echelon with 60 armored vehicles arrived from Russia to the railway station Amvroziivka (Donetsk region). The columns of military equipment moved towards Novoivanivka - Kumachove - Telmanove;

-on 21 February militants' attack was carried out against the settlement of Shyrokyne near Mariupol (Donetsk region). Tanks, artillery and mortars were used against the ATO forces. Several Ukrainian soldiers were wounded with varying degrees of severity. In the absence of the order to open fire from heavy weapons, the Ukrainian forces held positions with only small arms;

-on 22 February a movement of two columns of the military equipment of the Russian army was registered at the crossing point Izvaryne (Luhansk region) towards the towns of Krasnodon and Luhansk with total amount of 47 trucks carrying ammunition and military property. In addition, a column of military equipment of the Russian Armed Forces consisting of 50 trucks carrying ammunition and military property was observed on the move from Russia towards Novoazovsk (Donetsk region). During that day, as a result of continuous attacks 2 Ukrainian soldiers were killed, 10 wounded;

-on 23 February the militants continued to fire at the Ukrainian positions from mortars, artillery and tanks near the settlement of Shyrokyne. Also, the militants used MLRS "Grad" to shell the settlements of Kominternove and Lebedinske near the city of Mariupol (Donetsk region);

-on 24 February during the entire day the militants were violating the ceasefire. They shelled the Ukrainian positions in all directions in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions. The militants continued to attack the Ukrainian positions near the settlement of Shyrokyne in the Mariupol direction.

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished colleagues,**

At the last meeting of the Forum we already informed the delegations about the preliminary results of the inspection, which took place on 10-11 February 2015 in accordance with the provisions of the section IX of the Vienna Document 2011. The inspection team of the Ukrainian Armed Forces had inspected the specified area of the Southern Military District of the Russian Federation.

On 23 February in an interview to the Russian TV One Channel the Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said that foreign military inspectors must speak louder about the results of their inspections on the military activity in Russia, particularly near the borders. Taking this opportunity we would like to state loud and clear the following:

1) The part of inspection which was carried out by the Ukrainian side from the air turned to be incomplete as significant limitations had been imposed by the Russian side in violation of the relevant VD provisions.

2) In particular, the escort team of the Russian Federation informed the Ukrainian inspectors that the inspection flight was prohibited closer than 25 km to the Russian-Ukrainian border.

3) In addition, without the consent of the Ukrainian inspection team the Russian side changed during the flight the route which resulted in the exit from the inspected area for a significant distance from the coast in the vicinity of the Gulf of Taganrog.

4) The Russian side refused the Ukrainian inspection team's demands to return to the specified area near the settlement of Sinyavskiy. Thus, the Ukrainian inspection team was unable to observe from the air the road and railway from Rostov-on-Don to Taganrog.

5) The Ukrainian team was also not able to examine these areas by a ground transport.

The limitations imposed by the Russian side concerned over 50% of the specified area. The Ukrainian side reserves the right to assume that in the area near the settlements of Veseloe, Kuzminki, Aleksandrovka and Kalmykovo significant military activity is being conducted due to the fact that this area was prevented from inspection.

The Russian side has not dispelled the serious concerns of Ukraine regarding the deployment of the Russian armed forces near the Russian-Ukrainian border. The official report on the inspection (format F38) was circulated in the OSCE network on 24 February 2015.

The competent authorities of Ukraine continue to observe the concentration of military equipment and personnel of the Russian armed forces in the proximity of the Russian-Ukrainian border. In particular, the concentration includes an echelon with armored vehicles, artillery and personnel near the settlement of Vesela Lopan', an echelon of tanks at the railway station Dolbino in the Belgorod region, units of the missile brigade of the Baltic Fleet near the settlement of Mozhayivka, equipment and personnel of the Communication Regiment, other military units on the territory of Oktyabrsk district in the Rostov region.

Mr. Chairman,

Ukraine continues to see a political solution as the only way out of this conflict. We urge Russia to exert its influence over the militants to stop their deadly hostile actions and fulfill their commitments under the Minsk agreements, as the only effective means for a peaceful sustainable solution based on respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We urge Russia to start implementing the Minsk agreements in their entirety as it committed to do in September 2014 and on 12 February 2015, including by exerting its influence on the illegal armed groups to abide by the ceasefire regime, to withdraw its regular troops from the territory of Ukraine, to halt violations of the state border with Ukraine and allow for meaningful OSCE monitoring and verification.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.