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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1088th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 February 2016

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The key to resolving the crisis in Ukraine remains in the hands of the Ukrainian Government. Unfortunately, the statement by our Ukrainian colleague demonstrates the unwillingness of the Ukrainian authorities to work on implementing the Minsk agreements. All efforts, as we can see, are focused on attempting to justify, with the aid of external reasons, why they are not willing or ready to implement the peace settlement and above all its political aspects.

Even the amendments to the Ukrainian Constitution, which are presented to us here as part of the implementation of the Minsk agreements, have still not been adopted. In addition, these amendments are the “domestic product” of the authorities in Kyiv. They have not been agreed upon with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk, as required by the Package of Measures. Even this half-hearted step has, however, still not been completed. The prospects of the amendments being approved remain unclear. What is more, certain preconditions and linkages are being put forward, which completely contravene the Package of Measures.

The Ukrainian Government applies the same logic to other provisions of the Minsk agreements, promising anything and everything but implementing nothing. As far as we are aware, there are no plans at the forthcoming session for the Verkhovna Rada to adopt any instruments to implement the Minsk agreements.

The continuing tension in the conflict zone and the intensification of shelling of settlements are cause for concern. We roundly condemn all violations of the ceasefire regime and call on all parties to the internal Ukrainian conflict to adhere strictly to the ceasefire agreements along the entire line of contact.

At the same time, it is clear that continuing tension in the conflict zone provides the Ukrainian authorities with a convenient excuse for refusing to begin serious work on

implementing the political aspects of Minsk II. Attempts to shift all the responsibility for the tension at the contact line onto the militias' actions are unsound.

The picture presented by our distinguished Ukrainian colleague of what is happening in Donbas is distorted, as usual, and not in line with reality. Here are just a few facts.

Recent reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) mention the barbaric shelling of Horlivka on 30 December from the settlement of Zaitseve in territory controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces. Two days earlier, on 28 December, Kominternove was subjected to shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces from a "westerly direction".

The OSCE Mission has reported new cases of Ukrainian military equipment "disappearing" from depots on a massive scale. Over the last few days alone, the monitors were unable to account for 31 guns (Rapira, 100 mm), 6 howitzers (Msta-B, 152 mm) and 2 mortars (82 mm). A new Ukrainian armed forces' stronghold was discovered not far from the line of contact at Novhorodske.

The Ukrainians have been rotating equipment, amassing new forces and equipping positions in the security zone. There are regular reinforcements coming in from neighbouring regions of Ukraine. This demonstrates a readiness to return to the option of settling the Donbas question by force.

We agree with the SMM's assessment that the presence of monitors near the line of contact has a restraining effect on the parties. We believe it is necessary to focus the Mission's main efforts on the security zone, rather than scattering its limited resources.

SMM "mirror" patrols (the same on both sides) in areas where reconstruction work is under way seem to be a good practice. It could be extended to all the segments of the line of contact.

It would be worth applying this principle to the entire region. Judging from the SMM reports, the monitors' patrols are not particularly interested in the situation at the rear of the Ukrainian forces, or else the information obtained for some reason does not make it into the Mission's final reports.

We believe that more detailed and summarized information on the number and routes of the SMM patrols would be extremely useful for all of us if we are to understand where the monitors' access is restricted and where they themselves prefer not to visit. It would be clear to everyone to what degree the "mirror" principle is being observed in the Mission's work.

The blockade of Donbas imposed by the Ukrainian Government is indisputable evidence of the punitive nature of the so-called "anti-terrorist operation". We are grateful to the SMM and the negotiators in the Trilateral Contact Group for their efforts, which have led to the opening of at least a few crossing points.

The Ukrainian Government's idea of closing these crossing points or suspending their operation is inadmissible and dangerous in our view. On the contrary, we are convinced of the need to open as many crossing points as possible right until the blockade of Donbas is lifted completely. We are confident that the SMM monitors could play a useful role here.

According to the SMM mandate, the Mission should facilitate dialogue on the ground. We believe that the SMM reports should contain information on the monitors' efforts to establish direct contacts between the administrations of neighbouring areas on both sides of the line of contact and between commanders of the corresponding subunits. These contacts are needed to prevent provocations. We believe this to be one of the SMM's most important tasks in facilitating a de-escalation of tension.

Agreement within the Trilateral Contact Group of modalities for local elections in Donbas and of law on special statuses and their subsequent consolidation in Ukrainian legislation would be one sign that the Ukrainian Government is ready for real work to resolve the conflict instead of simulating this process. This is what the Normandy format leaders agreed to in Minsk and Paris. We urge that work be stepped up to that end.

Resuming the exchange of prisoners and implementing the paragraph on the amnesty and prohibition of prosecuting and punishing persons in connection with the events that took place in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine is also a matter of priority.

In conclusion, I should like to recall that the Minsk Package of Measures, which was the outcome of difficult negotiations and compromises, is the only way in which a peaceful political solution to the Ukrainian crisis is possible. There is no alternative. It is not in the interests of the inhabitants of Ukraine or its neighbours to delay implementation.

The main obstacle to a peaceful settlement is the so-called "war party" in Ukraine, which gave a hostile reception to the signing of the Package of Measures and is now doing everything to sabotage it. There needs to be a thorough assessment of the criminal excesses of right-wing radicals and nationalists and thought needs to be given to how we can together help Ukraine to deal with these destructive phenomena.

We cannot but draw attention to the appeal by a group of ambassadors of Western countries, who were also very active on the Maidan, in connection with the resignation of the Minister for Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine. As events in recent years have shown, our Western colleagues can still have some effect on the authorities in Kyiv. It is time for them finally to use this influence for peaceful purposes.

Thank you for your attention.