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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1147th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

25 May 2017

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation in Ukraine is heating up. Political infighting is intensifying, which pushes the country further away from a settlement of the conflict and aggravates the animosities in society.

Measures such as the Donbas blockade, so-called decommunization, the rewriting of history, the hunt for “separatists”, and restrictions on free access to information through bans on Russian-language television channels, websites and social media are working against the peaceful settlement of the conflict. The list of such measures is constantly growing.

On 18 May, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) reported a 2,500-strong rally in Kyiv against the draft laws submitted to the Verkhovna Rada on the status of religious organizations. These draft laws restrict the rights of Ukraine’s citizens and violate the Constitution of the country, which establishes the principle of non-interference and separation of church and State, and also guarantees the right to freedom of ideology and religious persuasion. On 15 May, the SMM confirmed the seizure of yet another church building belonging to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the village of Kynakhivtsi in western Ukraine.

The discriminatory policy towards a significant number of Ukraine’s citizens continues. On 23 March, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted at the second reading a draft law on the introduction of language quotas on Ukrainian television, restricting the content in Russian and other minority languages to 25 per cent on national television and 50 per cent on regional channels. In a country where a huge part of the population speaks and thinks in Russian, access to information and participation in political and public life has been restricted for the majority of citizens.

It is not only the Russian-speaking population that has been hit by this policy. The Polish and Hungarian minorities in Ukraine are also raising their voices in protest. A petition

by the Hungarian community of the Zakarpattia region to President Poroshenko dated 21 May gathered 64,000 signatures.

The Ukrainian nationalists show no sign of stopping. According to the director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance, the country's inhabitants need to sever all contacts with relatives living in Russia.

There is talk about introducing a visa regime with Russia. What is the purpose of that? It has already been made difficult for Russians to enter Ukraine as it is. Many are denied entry without any reasonable explanation. Perhaps the idea is to provoke retaliatory measures to hit the millions of Ukrainians who travel to Russia for work or to visit their relatives.

The Ukrainian Government continues its repression of dissidents. On 21 May, the 73-year-old organizer of the Immortal Regiment march in Vinnytsia was arrested. He is facing up to 15 years in prison for organizing a peaceful march.

On 23 May, a court in Kharkiv sentenced 69-year-old Yury Apukhtin to six years' imprisonment for "organizing mass disturbances accompanied by rioting, and for public calls for a violent overthrow of the Ukrainian constitutional system and the seizure of State power". He was detained in April 2014. One cannot help but notice that all these charges fully apply to the instigators and leaders of the Kyiv Maidan, whose actions led to a coup d'état. They apply even more to the actions of those who in early 2014 occupied government buildings in Kyiv and western Ukraine.

Against this background, unfortunately, it is not surprising that the Ukrainian security forces are exacerbating tension along the line of contact in Donbas, stepping up the indiscriminate shelling of towns and villages. According to the SMM, three people were injured in the Petrovsky district of Donetsk, one civilian was killed and another injured in Kruta Balka, four houses were damaged in Dokuchaievsk, two houses suffered damage in Makiivka, and there were artillery strikes against Kominternove, Sokilnyky, Telmanove and Yakovlivka.

On 18 May, the Ukrainian armed forces once again disrupted the disengagement of forces in Stanytsia Luhanska.

Both sides are restricting the monitors' freedom of movement. For a long time, the Ukrainian armed forces have completely closed off access for the SMM to the roads to Stanytsia Luhanska, Shchastia, Popasna, Bohandivka and Katerynivka under the pretext of the threat of mines. The Ukrainian armed forces routinely, without causing a stir and without any special reports from the SMM, block the monitors' access to weapons storage sites.

It is essential to step up the SMM's co-operation with the local authorities. We note the assistance provided by militia fighters to the monitors on 19 and 20 May in retrieving their unmanned aerial vehicles that had carried out unplanned landings in Stanytsia Luhanska and Zernove.

The SMM should conduct equal monitoring on both sides of the line of contact and it must not turn a blind eye to the discriminatory policy pursued by the Ukrainian Government, the infringement of citizens' rights and fundamental freedoms in Ukraine, the situation in the

western and central regions of the country, manifestations of radicalism, neo-Nazism and extremism, and growing public and internal political conflicts.

Mr. Chairperson,

An intra-Ukrainian settlement is possible only by observing the rights and interests of all the inhabitants of the country. The only road map for a peaceful solution to the problems existing in Ukraine today is the Minsk Package of Measures endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202. In accordance with it, the Ukrainian Government is required to grant special status to certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, consolidating this in the Constitution. It should restore the severed social and economic ties with Donbas and abolish the discriminatory checkpoint regime, which radical elements at the line of contact and their masters in Kyiv use to line their pockets. It is time for the Ukrainian Government to reject the policy of nihilism and cynical provocation of tensions in Donbas and seriously tackle the entire range of political, economic and social obligations to its citizens. This is all possible as long as the political will exists.

Thank you for your attention.