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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1235th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 July 2019

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation in Donbas remains unpredictable. Violations of the ceasefire regime continue. There are still more than 1,000 violations per day, including cases involving the use of heavy weapons. Since his inauguration, the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyi has already made several visits to Donbas, including visits to the line of contact, but tensions persist there. The declarations by the new leadership of Ukraine regarding its desire for peace have not been followed by a dramatic improvement of the situation on the ground. The Ukrainian armed forces continue their shelling, as a result of which civilians suffer.

In every report by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) over the past week, there has been information about fresh destruction. The vast majority of this destruction was recorded by the Mission in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Residential buildings have been damaged in Kominternove, Patriotychne, Dzerzhynske, Yasynuvata, Zolote-5/Mykhailivka, Yasne, Dokuchaievsk and Pervomaisk. As a result of shelling in Kominternove, the Church of Saint Spyridon belonging to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church suffered serious damage. Shelling from Ukrainian security forces' positions disrupted the operation of a power substation in Krasnoarmiisk, and a gas pipeline was damaged in Pervomaisk and a heating substation in Dokuchaievsk. Civilians have been injured in Horlivka and Nova Marivka, and also in Novhorodske. There was no mention in the SMM's reports that a female civilian was injured by gunfire on 6 July at the checkpoint in Maiorsk near Horlivka. According to media reports dated 11 July, a female resident of an apartment building died a few hours ago as a result of mortar fire this morning in Holmivskiyi. We urge the Mission to carefully follow up on the aforementioned information.

We support the swift agreement by the parties of the so-called bread truce at the forthcoming meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) on 17 July. As the experience of previous truces has shown, the amount of shelling and the number of casualties decreased significantly when they came into effect. For a ceasefire to be sustainable, it must be accompanied by additional de-escalation measures. The OSCE SMM has proposed a number of such measures. They include the promulgation of the orders for a ceasefire and disciplinary proceedings for those who violate them, the prohibition of the deployment of weapons in residential areas and near civilian infrastructure facilities, and the prohibition of sabotage activity.

The disengagement in Stanytsia Luhanska made it clear that, given the necessary political will, the Ukrainian leadership can fulfil its obligations regarding the implementation of the TCG Framework Decision and the agreements reached in the “Normandy format”. After almost three years of inactivity on the part of Ukraine and more than 80 signals from the militia indicating their readiness for disengagement, the Ukrainian Government finally changed its approach. This has contributed to a reduction in military tension in that area.

De-escalation is an important condition for normalizing the humanitarian situation. Between 8,000 and 11,000 people continue to cross the line of contact at the checkpoint in Stanytsia Luhanska each day. They are still forced to cross the destroyed part of the bridge, which was blown up by Ukrainian security forces in early 2015 (Illia Kyva, deputy head of the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine in the Donetsk region publicly admitted this at the time). Now, the Ukrainian Government and the Luhansk authorities should urgently begin substantive work on its reconstruction, and also on demining inside the disengagement area and improving the throughput capacity for the civilian population. Incidentally, the International Committee of the Red Cross also proposed its own project for the bridge’s repair, but for some reason it was not to Ukraine’s liking. The parties need to agree upon the details within the relevant TCG working group in Minsk.

It is important to build on the momentum that has emerged since the withdrawal of forces and hardware beyond the limits of the disengagement area in Stanytsia Luhanska. The status quo needs to be restored without delay in the two other areas – Petrivske and Zolote – where the actions of the Ukrainian armed forces led to the disruption of the disengagement process and the reoccupation of these areas. For example, in Zolote the SMM regularly records military equipment belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces and violations of the ceasefire regime, both inside the area and close to it. This has a negative impact on the safety of the Mission’s monitors as they carry out their work. On 4 July, SMM monitors, who were preparing to launch an unmanned aerial vehicle, came under fire from Ukrainian security forces’ positions on the southern rim of the disengagement area. Another Mission patrol was fired at on 5 July on the outskirts of the village of Zolote-5/Mykhailivka. Completion of the disengagement process in Petrivske and Zolote would not only improve the security situation, but would also allow work to begin on agreeing on other disengagement areas at the line of contact, contributing to de-escalation in general.

The actions of the Ukrainian security forces continue to threaten the work of journalists. The latest incident of targeted fire from Ukrainian positions at Russian reporters was recorded on 7 July in Kominternove. Correspondents from the “Zvezda” television channel, who were filming a report about the destruction on the square in front of the cultural centre, came under fire there. Earlier, Russian journalists were fired at on the outskirts of Donetsk on 27 June and 2 July. Media representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk region have also been affected. On 8 July, a camera crew from the local television channel “6TV” came under fire in Horlivka.

Mr. Chairperson,

Instead of promoting internal Ukrainian dialogue, some OSCE participating States continue to invest in maintaining military tensions in Ukraine. Some 600 instructors, military experts and advisers from a number of NATO countries, who are training Ukrainian military personnel in the “art of war”, are working in the country. New agreements are being concluded on weapons deliveries to Ukraine. It is clear, for example, that the transfer by Lithuania of another shipment of 1 million rounds of ammunition to the Ukrainian authorities or Canada’s recent inclusion of Ukraine in the list of countries to which the sale of arms is permitted will not help to normalize the situation. It is evident from the SMM’s reports that some of the foreign weapons delivered to Ukraine earlier are being used by the Ukrainian armed forces in Donbas.

The expectations of the millions of inhabitants of Ukraine who voted against the destructive course taken by previous authorities have not yet been met. The outgoing elite continue to resist any change, exerting unprecedented pressure on the media and in fact practising censorship. The situation surrounding the initiative by the “NewsOne” Ukrainian television channel to organize a TV link-up with the “Rossiya-1” channel, during which there should have been a depoliticized discussion among civil society representatives, was telling. Almost immediately, the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine began looking into whether the channel could be deprived of its licence, while the Office of the Prosecutor General even instituted criminal proceedings under the articles on “attempted treason” and “the financing of terrorism”.

Mr. Chairperson,

There has been much talk in Ukraine of late about the need for a creative approach to resolving the crisis in Ukraine. However, it should not come down to attempts to erode existing agreements or think up new negotiation formats. The existing commitments simply need to be fulfilled. The chance to normalize the situation in Ukraine and improve its relations with its neighbours has not been squandered yet. We trust that the new Ukrainian leadership is aware of the need to build direct dialogue with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk and will begin its responsible implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, which was endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202. We urge that the Ukrainian Government be encouraged to implement all of the Package’s provisions in good faith.

Thank you for your attention.