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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1312th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

6 May 2021

**On the deteriorating situation in Ukraine and the continued non-implementation by the
Ukrainian authorities of the Minsk agreements**

Madam Chairperson,

The stalemate in the settlement of the crisis in Ukraine persists. In Kyiv they are still merely going through the motions of aspiring to peace, avoiding dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk on the conditions for continued coexistence. In that connection, Ukraine's representatives remain the sole participants in the negotiations who are methodically asserting their desire to change the composition of the existing settlement formats and rewrite the Minsk agreements, or even to withdraw completely from the Minsk process.

On 2 May, the head of the Ukrainian delegation to the negotiations in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), Leonid Kravchuk, made a policy statement live on the television channel Ukrayina 24. He confirmed that the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, "which was endorsed by the United Nations Security Council and therefore has greater legal force", is the main document of the settlement process. However, he immediately added that Ukraine was not happy with the sequence of actions stipulated in that document, especially with regard to the procedure for reinstating control over the border.

In that connection, Mr. Kravchuk expressed Ukraine's position as follows. "The question could be put like this: either withdraw from the Minsk process or expand the format by moving it, say, to somewhere in Europe, changing its composition to a higher level of officials, and ensuring that all documents comply with the norms of international law and are binding." Incidentally, the suggestion to think about changing the Minsk format had been confirmed earlier by President Zelenskyy in an interview with the *Financial Times* on 26 April.

As is evident from the aforementioned statement by the head of the Ukrainian delegation, in Kyiv they have no intention of fully implementing the key settlement document – the Package of Measures, the text of which, without any exceptions, has become part of international law. As we can see, Ukraine's revised position is that unless this document is rewritten or replaced by some other international legal instrument, Ukraine will withdraw from the Minsk negotiation process. All this also calls into question the outcomes of the "Normandy format" summit in Paris on 9 December 2019, at which President Zelenskyy declared his commitment to the Minsk agreements.

In an attempt to justify its inaction, the Ukrainian Government is shifting the responsibility for the impasse in the settlement on to Russia. Unfortunately, foreign “minders” from among some OSCE participating States, who are deliberately manipulating the facts and distorting the essence of the Minsk agreements, are seconding them in this. There is no other explanation for the calls for Russia to respond to Ukraine’s supposedly “constructive approach” and to fulfil certain obligations under the Minsk agreements.

We urge you to carefully read the Minsk Package documents. There is no mention there about any obligations on the part of the Russian Federation. Thus, in accordance with the Package of Measures, it is the parties to the conflict, namely the Ukrainian Government and the Ukrainian armed forces on the one hand, and representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and their armed formations on the other, that have such obligations.

The key to establishing lasting peace in Donbas is a comprehensive political settlement, which should be implemented through direct dialogue between the representatives of the aforementioned parties. Despite this, in recent weeks the Ukrainian leadership, in particular President Zelenskyy and Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, have stood out with their statements about the categorical rejection of dialogue with the current representatives of Donbas. All these pronouncements can hardly be referred to as demonstrating a “constructive approach”.

The demolition of the Minsk process being undertaken by the Ukrainian Government is fraught with a serious escalation of military tensions in Donbas. According to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), the number of ceasefire violations almost tripled in April compared to the previous month and exceeded 8,000.

We are concerned about the SMM’s reports that the parties have laid mines in new areas near the line of contact. The Ukrainian military continues to hold the record in this context. For example, they carried out large-scale mine-laying on the western outskirts of Donetsk near the settlements of Nevelske and Avdiivka, where over 1,700 and more than 900 freshly laid mines were spotted respectively (report dated 29 April). In addition to shelling, the use of mines continues to pose a serious threat to the safety of the civilian population. For example, the Mission reported that a farmer had been injured near the Ukrainian armed forces-controlled village of Hnutove in the Donetsk region on 15 April (report dated 30 April).

The unwillingness of Ukraine’s representatives to implement in good faith the ceasefire-strengthening measures agreed on by the Ukrainian Government and the authorities of Donetsk and Luhansk in the TCG on 22 July 2020 plays no small part in the escalation of tensions. Ukraine is blatantly violating the very first paragraph of that document, which provides, among other things, for a ban on the use of “any types of aerial vehicles”. By way of illustration, as the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence reported on 28 April, last week in the Joint Forces Operation zone the Ukrainian military conducted training drills in the combat use of helicopters.

The Ukrainian Government is avoiding carrying out the task stipulated in the aforementioned measures regarding the involvement of a co-ordination mechanism for responding to ceasefire violations. Despite the efforts of the TCG co-ordinators, the parties failed to reach agreement on a corresponding statement last week. The reason is the same as before, namely the reluctance of the Ukrainian Government’s representatives to engage with Donetsk and Luhansk, not least with regard to the Russian proposals for the content of such a document.

One further point. During the last meeting of the Permanent Council, the distinguished Permanent Representative of Ukraine said that there was “zero tolerance for neo-Nazism” in his country. What we

witnessed then was yet another attempt to present disinformation. As experience has shown, only international pressure on Ukraine's current leadership can force it to at least publicly disassociate itself from the neo-Nazis. This was clearly evident with regard to the march in Kyiv on 28 April. Its participants glorified the 14th Ukrainian Grenadier Division of the Waffen-SS ("Galicia Division").

The Ukrainian authorities did not issue statements condemning the event until two days after it had received widespread international attention and provoked a negative reaction from a number of States. However, as the SMM reported, the march itself on 28 April was held with a police escort. And that means with the assistance of the police. The participants in the march were not detained, nor was the action stopped. Moreover, the police helped to close Kyiv's central streets to allow the march to go ahead unhindered.

According to the Kyiv city administration, the march was organized by a certain Andriy Medvedko. We would remind you that he is a member of the far-right nationalist organization C14 and a suspect in the murder of the journalist Oles Buzina, who was brutally killed on 16 April 2015. On 19 January 2021, together with a group of like-minded associates and the police, Medvedko was involved in the dispersal of an anti-fascist rally on Kontraktova Square in Kyiv.

We regret that these details have not been reflected in the SMM's reports. We call on the Mission, in accordance with its mandate, to cover in as much detail as possible what is happening in the country. We would remind you of the long-overdue need for the publication of a thematic report by the Mission on the manifestations of aggressive nationalism, neo-Nazism and xenophobia in Ukraine. There is plenty to go by.

We are surprised at the lack of response from the Swedish OSCE Chairmanship to the manifestations of neo-Nazism in Ukraine. This is especially relevant in the lead-up to the 76th anniversary of the victory over Nazism in the Second World War.

We should like to draw attention to the Arria-formula meeting of members of the United Nations Security Council held via videoconference on 5 May in connection with the seventh anniversary of the tragic events of 2 May 2014 in Odessa. I would remind you that in the course of these events armed Ukrainian right-wing radicals laid siege to the Trade Union House building, where civilians were seeking refuge from them. This siege resulted in the deaths of scores of civilians. During the videoconference, eyewitnesses to these events shared their testimonies and assessments of what had happened. We recommend that you study them carefully.¹

Need I remind you that the upsurge in aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism following the February 2014 coup was one of the decisive factors in the deepening of the social divide in Ukraine and led to the armed confrontation in the east of the country? Many Ukrainians opposed the imposition of values alien to them by armed nationalists from the Maidan, who were subsequently deployed as "volunteer battalions" to eastern Ukraine by the post-Maidan authorities to suppress dissent together with army units.

We call on the foreign "minders" and political sponsors of the current leadership of Ukraine to bring all their influence to bear so that the central authorities in Kyiv distance themselves from the neo-Nazis not in words but in deeds and embark on a path of genuine social dialogue. Opportunities for such dialogue are also provided for in the Package of Measures. Its provisions should be implemented in their entirety, in the correct sequence and in a co-ordinated manner.

Thank you for your attention.

1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_1j0sLr54A