

PC.DEL/524/17

28 April 2017

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. DMITRY BALAKIN,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1142nd (SPECIAL) MEETING OF
THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 April 2017

**On the landmine incident involving a patrol of the
OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and the situation in Ukraine**

Mr. Chairperson,

We were shocked at the tragic incident resulting in an explosion involving a vehicle belonging to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), as a result of which on 23 April a member of an SMM patrol team was killed and two other members injured. We fully associate ourselves with the words of condolence in connection with the death of the paramedic who was working with the SMM monitors. The tragedy of the situation is underscored by the fact that the first victim in the SMM's more than three years of operation in the field was a paramedic, whose work involved providing assistance to people in the event of such incidents.

We wish a speedy recovery to the monitors injured in the blast.

We once again express our support for the SMM's work in general and the selfless efforts of the SMM monitors and international personnel helping them to carry out their mandate.

We roundly condemn the explosion involving the SMM vehicle. This should not have happened, and nothing like this should happen again.

A swift, thorough, impartial and objective investigation of the incident is required. It is important for all the parties involved to play a part in the investigation – the OSCE, the authorities of Ukraine and certain areas of the Luhansk region, and the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG).

Until we have a complete picture and the circumstances of the incident are clarified, we will refrain from pointing out the guilty parties, who, once it is established who they are, must of course be brought to justice. However, it is highly likely that this was a deliberate provocation intended to undermine the conflict settlement process in Donbas.

The need to ensure the safety of the OSCE monitors is set out in the Mission's mandate and has been mentioned on numerous occasions by the leaders of the Normandy format countries, including during their recent telephone conversation on 17 April. The Mission leadership and the participating States have already done a great deal over the past three years to improve the safety of the monitors, which remains our priority.

Much more can still be done.

In particular, it is necessary to step up work within the TCG and the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC), which was established at the request of the President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, and consists of Russian and Ukrainian military personnel. Unfortunately, Ukraine is constantly taking steps to make the JCCC's work difficult.

It is important that the SMM maintain as close contacts as possible with those who control the territory on both sides of the line of contact. There needs to be co-operation with the JCCC and it would be extremely useful if representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions were once again present in that body.

We welcome the fact that the Mission is continuing its work across Ukraine, including in the conflict zone. Priority attention should continue to be paid to the line of contact, where violations of the ceasefire regime still occur. Residential districts and civilian infrastructure facilities are still being shelled.

Between 10 and 23 April, the monitors recorded the consequences of shelling of militia-controlled towns and villages from directions where Ukrainian armed forces are deployed. Houses and a kindergarten were damaged in Dokuchaievsk, along with houses in Dzerzhynsk, Donetsk, Molodizhne, Syhnalne and Frunze. The Mission reported that civilians had been injured in the Petrovsky district of Donetsk and in Kominternove, and that there had been artillery strikes on Sakhanka.

The SMM reports a significant volume of military equipment mainly belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces in areas from where it should have been withdrawn. Between 10 and 23 April, in violation of the Package of Measures and the Addendum to it, 99 units of heavy weaponry belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces were discovered in Anadol, Artemivsk, Verkhnobohdanivka, Dobropillia, Ivanivka, Izhevka, Kalinine, Lyman, Malynivka, Rybynske and Sievierodonetsk.

Long before the SMM vehicle struck the mine, the Mission had repeatedly drawn attention to the threat posed by mines and unexploded shells in Donbas. It made reference to minefields near Ukrainian armed forces' checkpoints in violation of the TCG decision on demining of 3 March 2016, and noted the existence of mines in Popasna and Katerynivka. On 14 April, the monitors observed signal flares attached to wires on the road near Zolote-4, and drew the Ukrainian JCCC officers' attention to the need to "remove the explosive devices from a populated area". Despite assurances that the road had been demined, a return visit on 23 April found that the tripwires were still in place.

Attempts to place the blame for restrictions on the SMM monitors' freedom of movement solely on the militia forces are inappropriate. On 11 April, an SMM unmanned aerial vehicle flying over Ukrainian armed forces' positions near Staryi Aidar came under small-arms fire. On 23 April, two intoxicated Ukrainian soldiers, one of whom was armed,

spoke aggressively to a team of monitors demanding personal information and that the SMM patrol members get out of their armoured Jeep. It is becoming a habit among Ukrainian soldiers to try to establish the monitors' nationality. They also refuse the SMM access to weapons storage sites. For example, on 10 April, the Ukrainian armed forces announced that Russian monitors would not be allowed access to depots.

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation in Ukraine, and not only in the conflict zone in Donbas, requires closer attention from the SMM and indeed from the entire international community in general. There is a clear and categorical unwillingness on the part of the Ukrainian Government to move towards implementing the Minsk Package of Measures. Even if we take the tragic incident involving the SMM patrol out of the equation, we note a stubborn unwillingness on the part of the Ukrainian authorities to switch the conflict from a military to a political framework. The Ukrainian Government is once again sabotaging the disengagement of forces and hardware in the Stanytsia Luhanska area. A different fabricated pretext is found each time. We could have made progress a long time ago, agreeing on new areas for the disengagement of forces, ensuring the security of key facilities along the line of contact – crossing points for civilians and vital facilities. And, of course, reducing the risk posed by mines.

The latest actions of the authorities in Kyiv clearly show that the Government of Ukraine does not intend to reintegrate Donbas into the socio-economic and legal framework of the country, but rather to alienate it. There is not the slightest desire on the part of the Ukrainian Government to end the punitive operation and lift the transport and economic blockade of the region, which has severed commercial and industrial ties between Donbas and the rest of the country.

Since 25 April, Ukraine has stopped supplying electricity to certain areas of the Luhansk region. Just like the blowing up of power lines in Crimea by extremists, this is too obvious to ignore. The Ukrainian Government is constantly trying to cut off the water supply to Donbas. This is confirmed by the repeated shelling of the Donetsk filtration plant.

The Ukrainian Government has been trying to deprive the people of Donbas of the right to live in accordance with their values and convictions. It has tried to deprive them of their history, public holidays and language. It has tried to cut them off from food, water, medicines and electricity. Punitive battalions, artillery and air force are being employed to that end.

If the Ukrainian Government could have deprived Donbas of air, it would have done so. This kind of policy by the Ukrainian Government is unequivocally aimed against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine for it cannot be combined with the tasks set out in the Minsk Package of Measures.

We consider it necessary to draw attention once again to the impunity of radical nationalists in Ukraine. On 2 May, we will mark the third anniversary of the tragedy in Odessa, where dozens of civilians were burned alive in Trade Union House. The investigation into this case has practically collapsed. The SMM reported the latest disruption of the hearings against one of the suspects owing to pressure from radicals, who on 19 April entered the courtroom where there were not even any police present. The investigation into

the murder of the journalist Oles Buzina in Kyiv two years ago is being deliberately sabotaged. The case has been suspended under an artificial pretext and there has been no investigation under way since April 2016. The two main suspects for the murder have been released.

The situation surrounding the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate is extremely alarming. We have repeatedly drawn the attention of the Permanent Council and the OSCE executive structures to the blatant cases of murder, torture, intimidation and harassment of Ukrainian Orthodox Church clergy and worshippers, and the seizure of church property in Ukraine. There have been many such instances since the start of the crisis. We will distribute an updated list in the OSCE.

The preservation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's close canonical ties with the Moscow Patriarchate, despite the prevailing nationalistic hysteria, is the reason behind the unceasing attacks on its clergy and worshippers and the campaigns to discredit it in the Ukrainian media.

We call on the Chairmanship, the Secretary General, the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also Focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions, to issue a clear public assessment of what is happening. We also call on the SMM to carefully monitor cases of intolerance and discrimination on religious grounds in Ukraine and inform the participating States of such cases, including in the Mission's reports.

These are just a few of the areas that stand out, where acute and aggressive intolerance on the part of Ukrainian nationalists and connivance on the part of the authorities is particularly evident. The ability of the present configuration of the Ukrainian authorities to implement the Minsk agreements is highly questionable. Nevertheless, we remain of the opinion that there is no other alternative to implementing the Package of Measures through direct dialogue between Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk if there is to be a peaceful political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis.

Thank you for your attention.