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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1351st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

20 January 2022

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

Madam Chairperson,

We are alarmed by reports about increased transfers of lethal weapons and military personnel to Ukraine by certain NATO member countries. This week alone, several British military aircraft loaded with guided missile systems landed in Kyiv. The fact that several thousand systems have already been delivered was confirmed by the Ministry of Defence of the United Kingdom on 19 January. US military transport and reconnaissance aircraft are increasingly appearing in the skies over Ukraine. In the coming weeks, according to the Department of State of the United States of America, the US Government plans to increase its deliveries of military supplies. In addition, the United States has removed barriers to the re-export to Ukraine of US-made missile systems and other weaponry from the Baltic republics. We are also concerned about reports of a contingent of Canadian military special operations forces being deployed to Ukraine and of preparations for a decision to send weapons. What will they be doing there? When will they appear at the line of contact? How does all this square with paragraph 10 of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, which stipulates the “withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under monitoring of the OSCE”?

All this is doing nothing to stabilize the situation in the east of the country in the interests of a sustainable settlement of the conflict, nor does it contribute to the strengthening of pan-European security in general. One thing is clear: NATO countries are deliberately supporting the hotheads in Kyiv who advocate a military solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine under the banner of confronting some imaginary “Russian aggression”. In fact, the Ukrainian Government is being pushed towards a new wave of violence in Donbas. It would seem that the objective is the same – to maintain tensions near Russia’s borders by any means.

Let us recall how, at the instigation of the US Government, the myth of Russia’s alleged “imminent invasion” has been hyped up recently. It was first mentioned last April, then in August, again in November, mid-December and in the run-up to Catholic Christmas and then Orthodox Christmas, and so on. All these insinuations are aimed at one thing – justifying and paving the way for the increased military assimilation of Ukraine by NATO countries.

At the same time, the constant repetition by the participants in our discussions of their support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine is not followed by genuine practical action. I am referring, first and foremost, to the need to facilitate a swift political settlement on the basis of the Minsk agreements, to which there is no alternative. It so happens that they provide for the reintegration of Donbas on the basis of compromises and prescribe direct contacts between the representatives of the Ukrainian Government and of the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk, which, conversely, the Ukrainian authorities are being actively dissuaded from by their current handlers. What is more, they are proposing that the Ukrainian Government should completely ignore the people of Donetsk and Luhansk and are trying to replace the need for dialogue with them by calls for discussions with Russia. Our country, incidentally, has no obligations under the Minsk agreements, but is ready to provide the utmost assistance in their implementation.

In accordance with the Minsk Package of Measures endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202, discussion of the future post-conflict status of Donbas as part of Ukraine was meant to start on the day after the withdrawal of the heavy weapons. This withdrawal was completed on 8 March 2015, which, by the way, was confirmed both by the parties to the conflict and by the OSCE, but already on 17 March 2015, the Ukrainian authorities introduced legislative changes making the practical implementation of Donbas's special status impossible. Nothing has changed over the years – the Ukrainian Government is methodically avoiding substantive dialogue with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG). As a matter of fact, the current Ukrainian authorities are actively pushing a draft law on the so-called transition period, which explicitly justifies only a military solution to the conflict – with the establishment of civil-military administrations in Donbas and institutionalized reprisals against dissidents in the form of some sort of “lustration”. I would remind you that this document was prepared by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and submitted to the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament), where it is now being actively studied.

Some of our partners prefer to ignore the Ukrainian armed forces' offensive operations and armed provocations near the line of contact. We have not heard any condemnation of such actions, which, incidentally, were reflected in the reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) at the end of last year. It is telling that the more than twenty declarative statements about commitment to a ceasefire that have been made public since the signing of the Package of Measures have not resulted in the establishment of a sustainable ceasefire. It is also clear that the Ukrainian military command's recent ambiguous statements following the TCG meeting on 22 December 2021 about its alleged readiness to observe the ceasefire-strengthening measures of 22 July 2020 could not “cancel out” their earlier statements to the effect that the truce meant nothing and the commanders on the ground were free to open fire as they saw fit. It is not surprising that the SMM has already recorded over three thousand ceasefire violations since the beginning of this year.

The protracted conflict is having the most negative impact on the lives of the civilians affected. We welcome the visit to Luhansk and Donetsk these days by the Co-ordinator of the TCG Humanitarian Working Group, Charlotta Relander. She has already stressed that she had been appalled by what she had seen. For example, the horrific – and that is a quote – shelling of civilian objects. As the Co-ordinator noted with reference to the Luhansk school in Zolote-5/Mykhailivka that has been shelled repeatedly, she “didn't know it was happening”. In this connection, we emphasize the importance of the Co-ordinators' visits to certain areas of Donbas so as to really assess the situation on the ground. There is also a great need not only for the SMM to provide prompt information about the destruction of civilian infrastructure, but also to catalogue and analyse these observations in thematic reports. So far, the SMM's work is clearly lagging behind in this respect.

New provisions of the law on the State language that directly prohibit the free publication of Russian-language print media in the country entered into force in Ukraine on 16 January. Their publication is now subject to a number of conditions, failure to comply with which will lead to the closure of many newspapers and magazines. This is nothing less than another round of attacks on the freedom of the media and on the rights of Russian-speaking citizens. It is strange that this issue has received no attention either from the SMM or from the relevant OSCE structures – for example, the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. Along with the steps taken by the authorities to purge the information space of undesirable media, this measure significantly restricts the opportunities for the free dissemination of information.

One further point. On 1 January, in a number of Ukrainian cities, radical nationalists marched with a police escort and under xenophobic slogans to mark the anniversary of the birth of the Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera. Video footage of these events is publicly available. Unfortunately, the SMM once again did not consider it possible to report on the xenophobic slogans that accompanied these events. The actions were preceded by nationalist and anti-Semitic outbursts in western Ukraine, about which the SMM did report, albeit not publicly.

The German and Israeli authorities also reacted to the glorification of the Nazi accomplice Bandera. The German Federal Foreign Office stressed, in particular, that it condemned the crimes committed by Ukrainian nationalists, including those led by Bandera, during the Second World War.

Once again, we call upon Ukraine's external handlers and the relevant OSCE structures to use all the influence available to them in order to induce the Ukrainian authorities to fulfil their existing obligations. It is important to send a clear signal to the Ukrainian Government about the unacceptability of military adventures and the perniciousness of the policy of stoking armed violence in Donbas, supporting aggressive nationalism and exacerbating social tensions.

Thank you for your attention.