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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1269th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL  
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

28 May 2020

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation in Ukraine is a source of increasing concern. As the quarantine restrictions in connection with the coronavirus are eased in the country, the supporters of radical nationalist ideas have become markedly more active. Against this backdrop, the situation in Donbas has deteriorated noticeably. We appreciate the efforts of the monitors from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), who are carrying out their work in these difficult conditions.

The number of casualties as a result of the Ukrainian Government's military operation is growing relentlessly. According to data published recently by the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU), the number of deaths and injuries among civilians since the beginning of this year (at least nine dead and approximately 60 injured) is more than a third higher than the figure for the same period in 2019. According to HRMMU data, in 2019, a total of 105 civilians were injured by artillery fire in the territory of Donbas, 81 per cent of whom were residents of certain areas of Donbas. Furthermore, the number of casualties for May alone set a new sorry record, being the highest figure recorded over the past two years. The absolute majority of these casualties, including five children who were injured, have been recorded in the territory of certain areas of Donbas, and all of them were victims of shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces. In that connection, the Head of the HRMMU, Matilda Bogner, again urged the command of the so-called Joint Forces Operation of the Ukrainian armed forces to stop shelling peaceful settlements in Donbas and to make the protection of civilians an absolute priority. Unfortunately, we have not yet heard such appeals to the Ukrainian armed forces from the SMM leadership.

The SMM reports that over the past week the number of violations of the ceasefire regime increased by 50 per cent. On 16 and 17 May, the Ukrainian army's shelling of infrastructure facilities on the territory of certain areas of the Luhansk region resulted in an escalation of tension. The extraordinary meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) in Minsk on 22 May did not lead to the establishment of complete "silence". At the online meeting, the Ukrainian Government agreed to provide the Luhansk authorities with guarantees for a ceasefire while repairs were carried out to damaged power lines, but the shelling continued even during the TCG videoconference. The SMM recorded instances of shelling directly during the agreed "windows of silence". Specifically, the monitors reported 24 explosions near the settlement of Berezivske on 22 May and

at least two similar violations on 23 May. The Ukrainian Government also failed to demonstrate a genuine commitment to stopping the violence in Donbas during the planned discussions in the TCG and its working groups held on 26 and 27 May. The absence of any progress on the political track of the settlement was no surprise either.

All of this is the result of the destructive position taken by the Ukrainian Government's negotiators. For example, on 22 May, the Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine and Minister for Reintegration, Oleksiy Reznikov, who is an active participant in the negotiations, stated on a Ukrainian television channel that the Minsk agreements needed "some updating if not a complete rewrite". He stressed that these views were shared by President Volodymyr Zelenskyi, the Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, Andriy Yermak, and the authorized representative of Ukraine in the TCG, Leonid Kuchma. The issue here, first and foremost, is the unwillingness of the Ukrainian leadership to follow the sequence of steps established by the Minsk Package of Measures that are necessary to achieve a comprehensive political settlement.

Furthermore, we have repeatedly drawn attention to the Ukrainian Government's recent policy of squeezing the representatives of certain areas of Donbas out of the negotiation process. On 27 May, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Dmytro Kuleba, announced that the Ukrainian Government had no intention of holding talks with the current representatives of Donbas, and that they apparently "have no prospects in the settlement process or in the future of Donbas". The Ukrainian Government is not concealing its goals, namely to purge the region of dissenting views and of all those who are now defending the views of its inhabitants. Against this background, the Ukrainian leadership is attempting to replace the real agenda with fake discourse, arguing that an agreement on Donbas needs to be reached with Russia. However, a clear principle stems from the Minsk Package of Measures itself: the fate of Donbas cannot be decided without taking into account the opinion of the people of Donbas themselves and the genuine and authorized representatives of Donbas living in the region. The Ukrainian Government needs to engage in direct dialogue with them.

We note with disappointment the absence of any public reaction from the "Normandy format" guarantors of the crisis settlement process in Ukraine – France and Germany – to such destructive approaches on the part of the authorities in Kyiv. We wish to emphasize that the Ukrainian Government is openly expressing its unwillingness to adhere to the Minsk Package of Measures, which was endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202. In doing so, the Ukrainian authorities are also undermining the achievements of the Normandy Quartet summits, including the summit meeting in Paris on 9 December 2019, where the importance of that document was reaffirmed.

We well remember what happened with the agreement on the settlement of the political crisis in Ukraine signed on 21 February 2014 by then President, Viktor Yanukovich, and the representatives of the Maidan. High-ranking representatives of France, Germany and Poland acted as guarantors for its implementation, having put their signatures to that document. After the breakdown of the agreement and the coup d'état that followed, a wave of armed violence swept across the country. I would not like the Minsk agreements to suffer the same fate.

Amidst the ongoing civil confrontation in eastern Ukraine and the dire humanitarian situation caused by it, the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom and a number of European Union countries continue to train and supply arms to the Ukrainian army and incite it to engage in further violence in Donbas. We urge them to reflect on their share of the responsibility for the suffering of the civilian population, especially as they plan to supply further lethal weapons. According to reports by Ukrainian officials, US and Canadian companies, having secured the approval of their respective governments, are executing contracts to deliver lethal weapons, including sniper rifles, to Ukraine. Back in 2015, the Minister

of Internal Affairs, Arsen Avakov, confirmed that they had received one of the first consignments of such weapons. Where are they now – in Donbas? Might this account for the unwillingness of the Ukrainian Government’s representatives to agree at the TCG on a package of additional measures in support of the ceasefire regime, including a ban on sniper fire?

On 12 May, the Ambassador of Ukraine to the United States announced the purchase of at least three large consignments of arms from that North American country in 2020. He did not specify exactly what kind of weapons. All this, like the planned deliveries themselves, is hardly in line with the Stabilizing Measures for Localized Crisis Situations, which were agreed on and endorsed by all the OSCE participating States. We stress that in the current conditions there is a need for efforts to facilitate an immediate ceasefire and direct dialogue between the representatives of the Ukrainian Government and the representatives of the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk in the interests of peace and security, rather than to encourage bellicose plans with regard to Donbas.

Unfortunately, at present we only see pandering to Russophobic and nationalistic manifestations in Ukraine’s domestic political life. On 23 May, Ukrainian radical nationalists marked the so-called “Heroes’ Day”. This date was chosen by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists in 1941 as a day of commemoration. After the coup d’état in February 2014, some representatives of State and municipal authorities began to observe it as well. For example, this year, accomplices of the Nazis from the Ukrainian Insurgent Army who are living in western Ukraine officially received lump sum payments. Events timed to coincide with “Heroes’ Day” were held with the involvement of the authorities in Lviv, Ternopil, Zhytomyr and Khmelnytskyi. On the same day, radical nationalists resorted to violence and stormed the office of the head of a political force in Kyiv that openly opposes neo-Nazism and xenophobia.

I might add that this subject has still not been reflected in the SMM’s reports. We reiterate our persistent call on the Mission to carefully monitor and catalogue information on manifestations of aggressive nationalism, neo-Nazism and xenophobia because they are having a direct impact on the overall security situation in the country. Unfortunately, we have not seen any reaction from the Ukrainian Government’s Western patrons to such excesses.

Meanwhile, on 26 May, a group of seven former US ambassadors to Ukraine, including the well-known Marie Yovanovitch, who represented the US administration during Petro Poroshenko’s presidency, released an astoundingly hypocritical open statement (posted on the website of the Atlantic Council, a non-governmental organization). They expressed their disappointment at “efforts to inject Ukraine into America’s domestic politics” and called on the current Ukrainian authorities to refrain from steps that could have a negative effect on bilateral relations. Needless to say, they did not mention the countless instances of direct US influence on Ukraine’s domestic political life. In their appeal, the former ambassadors actually urged people to ignore the documentary evidence, made public last week, of gross interference by the United States in the internal affairs of Ukraine, the fulfilment by Mr. Poroshenko of instructions from his US mentors, and his personal obligations to the US Government that were kept secret from the Ukrainian public.

We point out once again that the continuing crisis in Ukraine is the result of the February 2014 coup d’état, which was inspired, directed, funded and organized from abroad and has led to the armed confrontation in Donbas and the suffering of millions of civilians in Ukraine on a massive scale. It is important that the Ukrainian people be able to take charge of their future for themselves without any external management being imposed on them by the United States.

We recall that the full implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures, which was endorsed by the United Nations Security Council, remains the only internationally recognized framework for the

settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis. We call on the OSCE to facilitate this process as much as possible. This is in the interests of pan-European security.

Thank you for your attention.