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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1276th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 July 2020

On the resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine concerning the scheduling of local elections in Ukraine for 25 October 2020

Mr. Chairperson,

On 15 July, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a resolution on the scheduling of regular local elections in 2020 that openly contravenes the Minsk Package of Measures. The resolution stipulates that local elections will take place in Ukraine on 25 October 2020, but that they cannot be organized in Donbas. The scheduling and conduct of elections there are made conditional on a number of criteria, including the Ukrainian Government first obtaining control of the border. Such an approach is at odds with the provisions of paragraph 9 of the Package of Measures, in accordance with which reinstatement of control of the border should start on day one after the local elections and end after the comprehensive political settlement, provided that all the political aspects of the Minsk agreements have been implemented, including carrying out constitutional reform and granting special status to certain areas of Donbas on a permanent basis.

Paragraph 12 of the Package of Measures stipulates that, on the basis of Ukrainian law, specifically the Act on Interim Local Self-Government in Certain Areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk Regions, questions related to local elections should be discussed and agreed upon with the representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions within the framework of the Minsk-based Trilateral Contact Group (TCG). According to paragraph 4 of the Package of Measures, such dialogue should have been launched on day one of the withdrawal of heavy weapons and, among other things, it is meant to take place in conformity with the law on the special status of Donbas. That law, as follows from paragraph 11 of the Package of Measures, is supposed to be permanent. To this day, no such law has come into effect. Additionally, in paragraph 9 of the Package of Measures it is emphasized that local elections are a crucial element of the comprehensive political settlement. Yet, the aforementioned resolution of the Ukrainian Parliament precludes the possibility of meaningful dialogue on local elections between the Ukrainian Government and the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk in the TCG.

Thus, the resolution on local elections adopted by the Ukrainian Parliament does not square with paragraphs 4, 9, 11 and 12 of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015 (endorsed by the United Nations Security Council) and puts a question mark over the very possibility of further progress on a political settlement. This resolution is a blatant attempt by the Ukrainian Parliament to rewrite the Package of Measures. One may legitimately ask whether Ukraine's actions are a sign of its intention to abandon

altogether a political settlement based on the Package of Measures, which still remains the sole internationally recognized basis for resolving the crisis in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian Government's destructive position regarding the criteria for holding local elections also manifested itself in the course of the TCG videoconference held yesterday (22 July). As a result, any discussion of political issues along with humanitarian and socio-economic matters was precluded there. In expressing our concern over the future fate of a political settlement, we must emphasize that without such a settlement it will not be possible to achieve a full, comprehensive resolution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. A responsible approach is called for – one that rules out any rewriting of the Minsk Package of Measures for opportunistic political ends, including those connected with the forthcoming elections.

Thank you for your attention.