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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1095th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 April 2016

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation in Donbas is now the most serious it has been in recent months. It is no longer a question of sporadic violations of the ceasefire regime, but of the threat of full-scale hostilities returning.

Responsibility for the current escalation of the situation lies entirely with the Ukrainian security forces. Instead of fulfilling their commitments regarding the withdrawal of weapons and equipment, they have seized part of the neutral territory in the Yasynuvata area, employed heavy artillery to hold onto it and begun shelling the roads connecting the militia-controlled towns and villages. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) has repeatedly warned of the danger posed by the parties' combat positions moving closer together. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian Government has consciously gone down this very path. First, the security forces occupied Pavlopil and Pyshevyk and strengthened their positions there. Then, in violation of the agreements on the demilitarization of Shyrokyne, the Ukrainian armed forces took control of the outskirts of that village. Now they have got as far as Yasynuvata.

The consequences of the shelling by the Ukrainian security forces are detailed in recent reports by the SMM. The monitors have reported that three local residents were injured and two houses were destroyed in Horlivka as a result of concentrated mortar shelling on 31 March 2016 from a north/north-easterly direction, where Ukrainian positions are located in Kodema. It has been confirmed that from the direction where Ukrainian armed forces are deployed Holmivskiyi was also shelled, using 152 mm artillery that should have been withdrawn under the Minsk Package of Measures. The SMM reported the shelling of Kominternove and the outskirts of Zaitseve on 31 March and 1 April from Ukrainian positions, resulting in the destruction of residential buildings and causing damage to a gas pipeline and a power line. On 31 March, a mortar was recorded to have hit Kalynove-Borshchuvate (Luhansk region) from a south-westerly direction (looking at the map, it is clear to see that Ukrainian armed forces are stationed there), and on 3 April the

village of Leninske (Donetsk region) was shelled from a westerly/north-westerly direction (these are also Ukrainian positions), resulting in damage to six houses. Violations of the ceasefire regime in the vicinity of Yasynuvata, Donetsk and Horlivka are recorded on a daily basis.

Over the past two weeks (from 17 March to 5 April), the following weapons belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces have been recorded by the SMM in the security zone, in violation of the Minsk Package of Measures: 8 Grad multiple-launch rocket systems near Kostiantynivka, 18 howitzers in Dalnie, 5 howitzers in Svobodne, 5 large-calibre guns in Zelene Pole, 4 howitzers in Pryvilne, 1 howitzer in Novoaidar, 1 mortar in Avdiivka and 1 tank in Opytne. While visiting Ukrainian armed forces' storage sites, the monitors noted that 66 howitzers, 76 guns of less than 100 mm in calibre, 43 mortars and 96 tanks were missing. In violation of the agreements reached in the Trilateral Contact Group, the Ukrainian armed forces continue to conduct live-fire training exercises in Trokhizbenka, Novoaidar, Mykolaivka and Spivakivka, and also to lay minefields near Pavlopil.

Mr. Chairperson,

Recent events have once again confirmed the important restraining role played by the presence of SMM monitors and representatives of the Russian-Ukrainian Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC) on the line of contact. They are not always able to keep pace with events, so it is of key importance for the SMM to conduct intensive patrols in the security zone since the shelling comes from there.

There is no objective link whatsoever between monitoring the border and observing compliance with the ceasefire regime. Convoys of Ukrainian military equipment and ammunition arrive in the area of the line of contact directly from deep within Ukrainian territory, without crossing the State border. If it is a question of monitoring Ukrainian military airfields, ports and checkpoints through which foreign weapons, instructors and mercenaries are sent to Ukraine, we would be interested in seeing the SMM's information on this subject.

The Mission is still unable to ensure mirror monitoring on both sides – considerably more patrols are sent to the territories not under Government control. There is scant information in the reports on the numerous and large-scale movements of Ukrainian equipment beyond the withdrawal lines established by the Minsk agreements.

The monitors visit the Ukrainian-Russian border on a regular basis. If you study their reports carefully, it becomes clear that the obstacles impeding their freedom of movement are not of a substantive nature and do not affect the monitors' ability to perform their functions, but are often connected with concerns for the safety of the monitors themselves.

On 4 April, the Ukrainian armed forces jammed Schiebel unmanned aerial vehicles in Zolote and Popasna. Instances when the SMM was refused access and delayed at Ukrainian checkpoints are listed in the reports. What is particularly astounding is that on 5 April armed members of the Asker nationalist battalion sent the SMM monitors packing, claiming that they were "obstructing their artillery positions".

The JCCC has considerable potential which is not yet being exploited to the full. It is an important bilateral control and co-ordination mechanism intended to help reduce tension.

Unfortunately, the JCCC has recently encountered serious obstacles in its work because of Ukraine, which has no interest in the Centre's efforts to objectively record any shelling. The SMM has reported that after a Russian JCCC officer witnessed artillery shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces in Avdiivka he was forced to leave the observation post. It was only thanks to the efforts of the SMM that it was possible to resume the joint work of the Russian and Ukrainian JCCC officers in Avdiivka. We urge Ukraine to do all it can, including in terms of personnel, to ensure that the Centre can work effectively, with genuine collaboration on both sides of the line of contact.

We support the development of additional confidence-building measures between the parties and the establishment of direct contacts between field commanders so as to arrange local truces and prevent incidents from occurring.

We urge those colleagues who have real leverage over the Ukrainian Government to see to it that the negotiations get back on track. Preconditions of any kind are inappropriate here. It is time to step up the work in all of the Trilateral Contact Group's subgroups in Minsk. This applies to political issues too – agreement on modalities for local elections and the entry into force of laws on the special status, amnesty, etc.

The Ukrainian Government is using the tension that it has been provoking on the line of contact as a pretext for refusing to engage in dialogue on the key problematic issues of a settlement. There are no objective reasons preventing the Ukrainian authorities from implementing the Minsk agreements through direct dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk. The problem is that if they are implemented, the Ukrainian Government will have to fully acknowledge its responsibility for what is happening in the country and answer to its people and the international community without the option of putting the problems down to the Russian factor or other external circumstances.

Distinguished colleagues,

We have consistently urged people not to take the dead-end tactic of hastily supporting the Ukrainian Government's policy, which not only deprives it of an incentive to work on a peaceful solution to the crisis but also strengthens the sense of impunity of the current Ukrainian authorities and of a number of extremist and nationalist groups.

Under the guise of pseudo-patriotic slogans, lawlessness might emerge across the country and not just in the conflict zone in Donbas. The nationalists tell the courts and law enforcement authorities what to do. They are confident that they will not be prosecuted for the robberies and murders they have committed because they see with their own eyes the absolute impunity, for example, of those who organized the sniper shootings on the Maidan. More than two years have elapsed, but an investigation into the murders of not one, not 20 but around 100 people remains unlikely.

Furthermore, members of the law enforcement authorities and security service are themselves frequently the most hardened criminals, who do not shy away from murder, robbery or torture.

We urge all of you to study for yourselves the Ukrainian, not Russian, public opinion polls on the level of trust in the justice system and law enforcement authorities.

The second anniversary of the events in Odessa – the mass burning of people in Trade Union House – is fast approaching. There are no results to show. The “patriots” who were detained immediately after the murder of Oles Buzina were released. A series of cases of mysterious suicides involving public and political figures have not been solved. Ukraine has not even attempted to investigate the murder of Russian journalists in Donbas.

One recent scandalous incident was the kidnapping, torture and murder of the lawyer Yury Grabovsky, who had defended a Russian citizen in a high-profile case. Whether we can count on an objective investigation and the guilty parties being brought to justice remains doubtful. We are extremely surprised at the silence of the representatives of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on this matter. Is it possible that those who defend Russian citizens or Russia are not worthy of such close attention?

Cases of massive criminal excesses by nationalist groups, beginning in the winter of 2013, have been documented in great detail. You can familiarize yourselves with them – if you are prepared to open your eyes and see who it is you have been harbouring. Even international bodies that from the outset have taken a one-sided, pro-Ukrainian position can no longer conceal everything that they see.

There is another side of the coin – ask the victors of the so-called “revolution of dignity” why the journalist Ruslan Kotsaba is being detained? Is four and a half years’ deprivation of liberty for a person who tore up a portrait of the President of Ukraine in line with European values? And what about the hundreds of people arrested for “domestic separatism”, for sympathizing with Russia or for their social media activity?

Lastly, we cannot but draw attention to the attempts in the Internet age to silence the voices of dissent in Ukraine. This applies not only to Russian State media, but also to fiction and film. Even Western journalists have somehow landed on the blacklist briefly, and now *The New York Times* has become a tool in the “hybrid war”. Friendly fire, as it were.

Thank you for your attention.