

PC.DEL/354/16

18 March 2016

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1093rd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 March 2016

**In response to the report by the
Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints
of Gukovo and Donetsk, Mr. Simon Eugster**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Eugster,

We join in welcoming the Chief Observer of the OSCE Observer Mission at the two Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk and thank him for his interesting report. We take a positive view of the work of the Observer Mission, which, I would remind you, was deployed at the invitation of the Russian Federation as a goodwill gesture in the wake of the Berlin Declaration of the Normandy quartet foreign ministers of 2 July 2014.

We note the factual content of the Observer Mission's reports. The observers are working without difficulty as indication of the calm situation at the border and do not report any military movements. Regarding "people in camouflage clothes" observed at the checkpoint, something that the distinguished Permanent Representative of Ukraine loves to recall with great frequency, in his previous report to the Permanent Council meeting Mr. Eugster stressed that this form of dress is very widespread in both countries among agricultural workers and labourers. The OSCE observers report no more than 200 such people per week, who are mainly travelling to Russia.

Given how sensitive this issue is, it is perhaps worth the Observer Mission giving some thought to drawing up criteria for determining whether people crossing the border at both checkpoints are wearing military uniforms. We believe this would aid the work of the Observer Mission itself and would add clarity to what is really going on in the area where the observers are working. Unfortunately, this issue remains highly politicized and is distorted by many of our partners.

The reports by the OSCE observers at the two Russian checkpoints confirm the difficult humanitarian situation in south-eastern Ukraine. Every week the Observer Mission documents Donbas residents entering Russian territory for a few hours to obtain food and medicines and to use cash dispensers. Unlike the authorities in Kyiv, who have imposed a

blockade on their own citizens, we cannot remain indifferent to the humanitarian disaster facing our brother nation. We regularly send convoys of humanitarian aid there in accordance with international humanitarian law. We are operating in an open and transparent manner. We notify Ukraine in advance of the cargoes. We send the humanitarian convoys through the Russian checkpoints, where Ukrainian customs officers and border guards are deployed in accordance with a bilateral agreement. The OSCE observers report that the Ukrainians are routinely present when Russian humanitarian convoys are inspected at the Donetsk checkpoint.

Unfortunately, our openness and additional confidence-building measures are being politicized by our partners. The representatives of Ukraine and certain Western countries continue to twist the words of the Observer Mission's reports and the agreements reached. In this context, we have once again heard today the familiar arguments about the Minsk Protocol and Package of Measures containing certain obligations on the part of Russia to extend OSCE monitoring to the entire section of the Russian-Ukrainian border. It is unclear what information sources they are using. We are willing to familiarize the Permanent Representatives of Ukraine and the United States of America once again with the texts of the aforementioned documents and also with United Nations Security Council resolution 2202, which their diplomats in New York supported.

In the light of the questions raised by a number of delegations regarding the privileges and immunities of the OSCE Observer Mission staff at the Russian checkpoints, I shall briefly touch upon these technical aspects. In view of the OSCE's lack of international legal personality, the only option is to have the observers accredited at the embassies of the respective countries in Russia. Switzerland has already done this with respect to Mr. Eugster. We suggest that the other countries involved follow that example. We can assure you that the Russian agencies are taking the necessary steps to ensure comfortable and safe working conditions for the OSCE observers on the basis of the Russian Government Order of 15 October 2014. The Chief Observer's request regarding the procedure for movement within the territory of the checkpoints and the possibility of using binoculars is being considered. A decision will be taken on this matter by the competent Russian authorities taking into account the special procedures at international checkpoints, which are restricted-access facilities.

We should like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Eugster for his work as Chief Observer and wish him every success in his future career. We trust that the Chairmanship in co-operation with the OSCE Secretariat's human resources department will quickly select a worthy successor.

Thank you for your attention.