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PC.DEL/1820/21
25 November 2021

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1346th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

25 November 2021

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

Madam Chairperson,

In recent weeks the confrontation in the context of the internal Ukrainian crisis has intensified. Ukraine's external handlers, who were actively involved in the unconstitutional overthrow of the authorities in February 2014, are now increasingly imposing a false paradigm of "Russian aggression", "preparations for an invasion" and suchlike.

The purpose of these destructive messages is obvious – to shift the focus away from the military operation initiated by the "Maidan authorities" in Kyiv in April 2014 against the population of Donbas, to give the conflict in eastern Ukraine an international spin and to place it in a broader geopolitical context. This is evidently being done in order to justify the current build-up of NATO capacity and activity near Russia's borders, to pave the way for the increased military exploitation of Ukrainian territory by the Alliance and, finally, to justify the Ukrainian Government's sabotaging of the Minsk agreements.

The comments by Ukrainian officials also attest to the fact that this hysteria is being fomented artificially. Not so long ago, the Ukrainian Government referred to reports that had appeared in the US media on this subject as "deliberate disinformation" and "part of information and psychological operations". The Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine Oleksii Danilov, the spokesperson of the President of Ukraine Serhii Nikiforov, official representatives of the Ministry of Defence and others succeeded in making comments along these lines. But then the United States of America began to increasingly foster the myth with its Ukrainian charges and European partners that some kind of "invasion" was inevitable. It comes as no surprise that the aforementioned individuals then "adjusted" their rhetoric.

All this is taking place against the backdrop of what is effectively a ruined Ukrainian economy, which has not been flourishing under years of foreign management. Today it is clear that Ukraine's economy cannot function without external subsidies and borrowing. The country is on the verge of entering a new spiral of socio-economic and political crises, the causes of which the authorities are willing to look for anywhere, just not in their own destructive policies.

Once again, it is convenient to blame all the failures on the “war” or some kind of “destabilization” from abroad. Equally absurd attempts were already made in 2016 by the previous Ukrainian leadership at the height of the political crisis. The “Shatun plan”, which was also used to justify some imaginary “Russian threat” and divert attention from pressing problems, is a case in point. As presented by the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs, where it was proclaimed “credible” at the time, this fake story sent shock waves through Ukrainian society. Incidentally, that fake plan was also “unearthed” in November back then and, reportedly, covered a period until spring 2017. And where is it now? Ukrainian society is now being invited to believe in a similar idea.

Despite the difficult situation, the Ukrainian Government has no intention of dispensing with the socio-economic blockade of Donbas, although the resumption of socio-economic ties with certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions on the basis of the implementation of paragraph 8 of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015 would have an obvious economic recovery effect for all of Ukraine. Under the guise of supposed concern for their fate, the people of Donbas continue to be denied their political rights and are deprived, for example, of the opportunity to take part in local elections. This applies, by the way, to the residents of the region on both sides of the line of contact.

The Ukrainian Government does not want to listen to the plenipotentiary representatives of certain areas of Donbas in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) either. Its obstructionist policy there of blocking all aspects of a settlement involving direct dialogue with the people of Donetsk and Luhansk has brought the efforts to resolve the crisis to a standstill. Thus, the instruction of the “Normandy format” summit of 9 December 2019 to reach agreement in the TCG on all the legal aspects of a special status for Donbas, as provided for in the Package of Measures, is not being implemented. The Ukrainian Government is not responding to the road map submitted by the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk in October of last year for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Moreover, during the meetings of the TCG and its working groups on 23 and 24 November, the representative of Ukraine suggested that work on that document should be abandoned altogether. Why do the Governments of France and Germany persist in turning a blind eye to the Ukrainian Government’s destructive actions in the TCG and its failure to fulfil its obligations?

Another “Normandy format” instruction – to incorporate the “Steinmeier formula” into Ukrainian legislation – is being left dangling in the air. I would remind you that the text of the formula was agreed on in writing by all the participants in the TCG back on 1 October 2019. More than two years later, the Ukrainian authorities have made no effort to enshrine the formula in legislation, not to mention the remaining unfulfilled tasks from the common agreed conclusions of the summit of 9 December 2019 relating to immediate security measures and important humanitarian aspects of a settlement. Instead of implementing them in good faith, the Ukrainian Government, with the support of the other co-sponsors of the Minsk agreements, merely insists on holding new meetings in the Normandy format. They make no secret of the fact that these meetings are needed apparently to “clarify” or, to put it bluntly, rewrite the Minsk agreements. How do such approaches square with the provisions of United Nations Security Council resolution 2202 of 17 February 2015, which calls for the implementation of the Package of Measures as it stands?

What the Ukrainian Government has certainly not forgotten about is the purchase, albeit on credit, of more and more military equipment and weapons. Those who evidently have no interest in a peaceful settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis and stubbornly advise the country’s authorities to refrain from direct dialogue with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk continue to invest in the militarization of Ukraine. Needless to say, such dialogue is a key condition of the Package of Measures and is essential for a comprehensive and sustainable settlement of the conflict in the east of the country.

The States supplying the Ukrainian Government with weapons do not seem at all concerned that these weapons could be used as part of the ongoing military operation in Donbas, which has already claimed the lives of more than three thousand civilians. On 23 November, the head of the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) Defence Industry Subcommittee, Ihor Kopytin, said that the Ukrainian Government's US partners had endorsed the use of Javelin missile systems in Donbas. He also confirmed that the Ukrainian military had been using Javelin systems "in combat". Such systems can be used as offensive weapons. Let me put a direct question to the distinguished representative of Ukraine: where were the Javelin missiles used in Donbas? A question for the US representative as well: why did the Ukrainian Government's US partners authorize the combat use of Javelin missiles in Donbas that Mr. Kopytin mentioned? Do the US taxpayers know that their money is being used to finance the bloodshed in eastern Ukraine?

I might remind you that the missile systems and ammunition were part of four consignments of military supplies sent by the United States to Ukraine in recent months as part of the latest package of so-called "military aid". By the way, during a visit to Washington, D.C., on 18 November, the Minister of Defence, Oleksii Reznikov, requested additional arms deliveries. Is this, then, how the Ukrainian leadership is preparing to implement a "peace plan" for Donbas?

In this way, the Ukrainian Government is showing complete disregard not only for the Minsk agreements, but also for the ceasefire-strengthening measures agreed on with the representatives of Donbas on 22 July 2020. The offensive operations by the Ukrainian armed forces in late October in the south of the Donetsk region, confirmed by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), have already led to an escalation of tension along the entire line of contact. It persists to this day – the number of daily violations recorded has increased significantly.

At yesterday's meeting of the TCG, the Ukrainian Government's representatives refused to respond to the call by the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk for a return to the implementation in good faith of the ceasefire-strengthening measures, a commitment which had earlier been disavowed by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Lieutenant General Valerii Zaluzhnyi. The issue of restoring the mechanism for providing security guarantees, which is essential for resolving humanitarian tasks and also for ensuring safe and secure access for the SMM on the ground, remains unresolved as well following the abduction of Andrey Kosyak, a Luhansk representative to the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC), by the Ukrainian military and intelligence services on 13 October.

Over the past two weeks, the Mission has confirmed damage to houses and other buildings in the settlements of Yuzhna Lomuvatka, Chervonyi Prapor, Dovhe, Marinka and Lozove. Once again, the vast majority of the destruction is in certain areas of Donbas. In addition to private property, civilian infrastructure came under fire by the Ukrainian armed forces during the same period, as also reported by the SMM. For example, School No. 4 in Zolote-5/Mykhailivka was shelled on 15 November while lessons were taking place. On 20 November, a window of a functioning hospital in the same settlement was found to have been damaged by shelling. Information about the shelling of a fire station in the settlement of Yasynuvata in the Donetsk region on 21 November is awaiting confirmation by the Mission.

In addition to the formations of foreign armed forces remaining in Ukraine under the guise of instructors in violation of paragraph 10 of the Package of Measures, new military formations from abroad may arrive there. For example, the visit to Kyiv by the UK Defence Secretary was accompanied by reports of a willingness to send a kind of "rapid response task force" of 400 to 600 British troops to Ukraine. This is in addition to the "instructors" already there. Presumably, this will be accompanied by deliveries to Ukraine of British missile systems, the preparations for which were announced a month earlier by Ukraine's

Ambassador to the United Kingdom Vadym Prystaiko. Militaristic messages are increasingly to be heard from the UK Government as well.

Plans for sending a “military training mission of the European Union” to Ukraine were recently announced. Similar EU presences have already been deployed in Somalia, Mali and the Central African Republic. Now it’s Ukraine’s turn. Will the distinguished representative of the European Union be able to explain what exactly this mission will be doing there? By the way, Swedish Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist has already stated that his country is ready to send members of its armed forces to take part in such a mission. We have to admit that under the Swedish OSCE Chairmanship, it would be much more useful to see entirely different efforts aimed, first and foremost, at putting an end to the military violence at the line of contact and also calling on the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk to jointly implement the Minsk agreements as soon as possible through direct dialogue.

Thank you for your attention.