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PC.DEL/1850/21
9 December 2021

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1348th MEETING OF THE OSCE
PERMANENT COUNCIL**

9 December 2021

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

Madam Chairperson,

The settlement of the crisis in Ukraine continues to be stalled as a result of the unwillingness of the Ukrainian authorities to adhere to the letter and the spirit of the Minsk agreements. The Ukrainian Government's course aimed at thwarting the implementation of these obligations enjoys the support of or, rather, is dictated by its external handlers.

This was confirmed yet again at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Stockholm on 2 and 3 December. During the discussions, certain States preferred to focus on promoting extremely politicized and confrontational approaches. Those same States are actively involved in whipping up hysteria about the "Russian invasion" of Ukraine that is allegedly being prepared. Incidentally, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Ann Linde, could see "no threat of war", as she told the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* in an interview on 4 December.

The objectives of this propaganda campaign are obvious, namely to justify the Ukrainian Government's sabotaging of the Minsk agreements, to legitimize the ramping up of NATO's military capabilities and activities in Eastern Europe in the immediate vicinity of Russia's borders, and to pave the way for strengthening the Alliance's military grip on Ukrainian territory and intensifying the delivery of equipment and weapons to Ukraine.

A further goal is being pursued simultaneously: to rally society within Ukraine itself around the country's authorities, which are bankrupt in almost every respect, and to divert attention from their miscalculations in economics and in domestic and foreign policy. While speaking to journalists on 26 November, President Zelenskyy claimed that nothing less than a coup d'état was in the making in Ukraine and that, according to his sources, it was scheduled to take place on 1 December. He again tried to argue that Russia had its notorious "hand" in this. The coup failed to materialize. Analysis of the situation reveals that the brouhaha orchestrated by President Zelenskyy was in fact an attempt by the authorities to settle political scores with big business.

The twelve months that President Zelenskyy said it would take him to achieve a peaceful settlement of the “Donbas problem” have long since passed. People continue to perish there as a result of shelling; the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) continues to record further destruction of civilian infrastructure. Most of this is occurring in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The Mission has also confirmed that those areas account for more than 80 per cent of the casualties of shelling since the beginning of the year. We expect the SMM to be as accurate as possible when recording the impact of shelling, which should include establishing not only the number of violations, the direction of fire and the weapons used, but also which side was firing. Any “retouching” of these facts is unacceptable.

Over the past few years, the Ukrainian authorities have not come any closer to implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015 – the sole internationally recognized framework for a peaceful political settlement. Not a single one of its provisions has been fully implemented, and no meaningful dialogue is taking place with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. The actions and rhetoric of the Ukrainian authorities indicate that over in Kyiv they have no peaceful intentions with regard to Donbas. Even President Zelenskyy himself does not hide this: speaking in Kharkiv on 6 December, he asserted that he was proud of the Ukrainian armed forces, which would “bring peace” to Donetsk and Luhansk. What about the political settlement, though?

All this is also confirmed by the statements made with increasing frequency by Ukrainian military commanders. For example, the statements by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, or by the commander of the “Joint Forces Operation”, Oleksandr Pavliuk, about the Ukrainian military’s *de facto* non-implementation of the ceasefire-strengthening measures of 22 July 2020, which were agreed on by the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Luhansk and Donetsk at the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG). At the same time, Ukraine continues to arm itself, with the support of a number of States that evidently wish to rekindle the smouldering conflict in Donbas.

Mid-range unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) of the Aist-100 type (one was recently spotted by the SMM) and long-range ones (Turkish Bayraktar UAVs) are being used for military purposes in the region. The fact that unmanned combat aerial vehicles are present there constantly was confirmed by Oleksandr Pavliuk in an interview with Radio Svoboda on 2 December. In that context, the reports that the Ukrainian Government is planning to receive a further 24 devices of this type from Turkey in the near future are worth noting. We would remind you that the ceasefire-strengthening measures stipulate a ban on the operation of any types of UAVs.

We have referred multiple times to the contribution of the United States of America to the militarization of Ukraine. A few days ago, footage taken by the ABC television network on the outskirts of Avdiivka, near Donetsk, came to light. These images show that the Ukrainian military there is equipped with US-made Javelin missile systems. This despite the fact that, not so long ago, official assurances were given that such systems would never turn up in Donbas. On 8 December, John F. Kirby, a representative of the US Department of Defense, announced that there were now no restrictions on their use. This week, the United States will deliver a further shipment of small arms and ammunition to Ukraine worth 60 million US dollars. The Ukrainian Government continues to be “fed” lethal weapons and ammunition – on top of cash injections and allocations for military needs – by other countries as well.

When recently analysing video material from the conflict zone in Donbas, French journalists noticed military personnel from the 128th Separate Mountain Assault Brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine using French-made APILAS handheld anti-tank grenade launchers. These journalists rightly asked themselves how French weaponry had ended up there. Why do our French “Normandy format” partners remain silent on that score? Admittedly, it might be recalled in this regard that a Franco-Ukrainian agreement was signed in

March for the supply of 60 such grenade launchers, which, as reported, were intended to be sent to Donbas after being tested for two months by the Ukrainian armed forces.

The international military exercise “Combined Resolve XVI” is currently being held in Germany. The Ukrainian military is also taking part in it. According to an official communication issued on 7 December by the Press Centre of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, military personnel from the 92nd Separate Mechanized Brigade, assisted by partners from the NATO countries, are rehearsing offensive operations there. It would not be amiss to recall here that members of this particular brigade are stationed in areas of the Luhansk region that are adjacent to the line of contact – for example, near the checkpoints at Stanytsia Luhanska and Zolote. No doubt they intend there to apply the skills in offensive operations that they picked up in Germany.

No less alarming are the plans of the European Union to support the Ukrainian armed forces through the European Peace Facility. Discussions at the expert level to this effect are under way in Brussels. Its “peaceful” name notwithstanding, this extrabudgetary instrument worth around 5 billion euros for financing military needs over the period 2021–2027 could involve the provision of lethal weapons – to Ukraine, among other countries. It was previously reported that the EU intended to deploy some kind of military training mission to Ukraine. Such plans raise doubts as to the EU’s commitment to the principle of peaceful settlement of conflicts – a principle enshrined in the founding documents of the CSCE/OSCE, including the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and the Helsinki Document 1992. They also raise doubts as to the EU’s commitment to international norms and its very own regulations, which prohibit the transfer of weapons to countries in which they may be used for domestic repression and may contribute to the prolongation of armed conflicts or the escalation of tensions.

The Ukrainian authorities demonstratively continue to give legislative form to actions that run counter to the Minsk agreements. On 26 November, President Zelenskyy submitted, for urgent consideration by the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament), a draft law that would allow foreign military units on Ukrainian territory in 2022. It is planned for them to take part in ten international military exercises, and that they will bring their own military equipment to these exercises. All this directly contravenes paragraph 10 of the Package of Measures, which stipulates the “[w]ithdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under monitoring of the OSCE”.

The *de facto* external control that has been established over Ukraine continues to remain the principal obstacle to dialogue between Ukrainians in the west, centre and east of the country. Against the backdrop of the myth about “Russian aggression”, which is being hyped up with renewed vigour by their foreign handlers, officials in Kyiv have begun to speak about the need to accelerate the military absorption of Ukrainian territory by the NATO countries. For example, in an interview with the newspaper *The Globe and Mail* on 5 December, the Minister of Defence, Oleksii Reznikov, said that he would like to see military personnel from the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada deployed across a swathe of territory from Odessa to Kharkiv, and also in Donbas. Reflecting on the possibility of deploying soldiers to “positions near the front line”, he pointed out in particular that the flags of the aforementioned three countries “should be flying around these territories”. It did not even occur to the Defence Minister of this supposedly independent country to mention the Ukrainian flag. He had previously made it clear that, under its agreement with the United Kingdom, the Ukrainian Government was moving on to the practical stage of construction of two foreign military bases.

In this context, those who in practice are seeing to it that implementation of the Minsk agreements and the ceasefire-strengthening measures are disrupted are completely free to do as they like in Ukraine. On 1 December, during a presentation at the Verkhovna Rada, President Zelenskyy conferred the title of “Hero of Ukraine” on Dmytro Kotsiubailo, a field commander of the so-called First Separate Assault Company of

the Right Sector Ukrainian Volunteer Corps. This man rose to fame in April of this year after asserting that, despite the ceasefire-strengthening measures in Donbas, the paramilitary nationalists under his command would not be complying with the ceasefire. As we can see, not only do the authorities not apply disciplinary sanctions to those who violate the ceasefire, as provided for by the existing agreements: they in fact openly encourage its disruption.

Moreover, instead of disarming that illegal paramilitary formation, as stipulated by paragraph 10 of the Package of Measures, the authorities render political and other support to its activities on the line of contact. All this is taking place amid the Ukrainian Government's evasion of direct substantive dialogue with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk at the TCG, as could be observed yet again during the videoconference on 8 December. As a result, the conflict continues and brings further suffering for the residents of Donbas.

Last week, the SMM issued a report on civilian freedom of movement across the line of contact. The report points out that population mobility has been significantly reduced owing to the escalation of violence and the public health measures adopted by the authorities in Ukraine and Donbas to curb the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). It is emphasized that among the main reasons for crossing the line of contact is the desire to maintain family ties and to access social benefits. The lack of such benefits is a direct result of the transport and socio-economic blockade imposed *de facto* by the Ukrainian Government in 2014 and subsequently enshrined in legislation – a blockade that continues to be implemented to this day, in violation of paragraph 8 of the Package of Measures, which stipulates the “full resumption of socio-economic ties” with Donbas.

To sum up. The ratcheting up of tensions around Ukraine is evidently intended to relieve that country's leadership of any responsibility for the armed provocations and the increasingly tense situation in Donbas. Instead of hyping up myths about “aggression” and an “imminent invasion” and egging on the Ukrainian Government to embark on new military adventures in Donbas, the current sponsors of the Ukrainian authorities would be far better advised to make use of the available leverage to sway their protégés – in particular, to induce President Zelenskyy and his team to set about strict implementation of the Minsk agreements in good faith as soon as possible on the basis of direct dialogue with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. This would be helpful, not least as a way of building on the Russian-US exchange at the highest level that took place on 7 December.

Thank you for your attention.