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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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AT THE 1262nd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

12 March 2020

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The crisis in Ukraine is still far from being resolved. The reason for this is the absence of political will on the part of the Ukrainian Government to fulfil its existing obligations. Unfortunately, apart from high-flown rhetoric about striving for peace, we have seen nothing as yet from the Ukrainian leadership, let alone practical steps towards the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

So far, the Ukrainian Government and the authorities in Donbas have been unable to achieve a meaningful relaunching and intensification of dialogue, as instructed by the Normandy format summit held in Paris in December, both on security issues and on political and humanitarian aspects. However, some grounds for hope are offered by yesterday's meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) in Minsk, during which agreement was reached on a decision to establish an advisory board for the discussion of political and legal aspects of the implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures. We urge our Normandy format partners to become involved in facilitating the work of that board.

Unfortunately, the shooting continues in Donbas all the same. Spikes in military activity were observed on 18, 23 and 26 February and also on 9 and 10 March, as reports by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) confirm. The Ukrainian armed forces frequently fire upon residential areas, moreover using not only small arms and light weapons. We might recall, for example, the recent shelling in Zolote-5/Mykhailivka from 73 mm guns (in that case, incidentally, the SMM confirmed the direction of the shelling, which pointed directly to the involvement of the Ukrainian armed forces), or the damage caused by machine-gun fire to a residential building and a functional school building in Oleksandrivka (Donetsk region). We have taken note also of yesterday's media reports of damage to residential buildings in Sakhanka as a result of large-calibre artillery fire, and also in Holmivskyi, which came under fire from anti-aircraft guns. Weapons and military equipment belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces were spotted in close proximity to the Marinka checkpoint.

The list of casualties of the shelling, which can hardly be called indiscriminate since civilians are deliberately being targeted, is growing. On 28 February, a resident of certain areas of Donbas who was returning home by car received a bullet wound while at the Olenivka checkpoint. Another car carrying civilians was hit by a projectile on 4 March in Dokuchaievsk, injuring a married couple. We urge the SMM

to carefully record all the consequences of the use of weapons against residential areas and to catalogue data on civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian objects.

The Ukrainian armed forces continue to ratchet up tensions near the line of contact. Alarming developments include a live-fire tank training exercise conducted by the Ukrainian military near the settlement of Spirne (Donetsk region) and the movement of surface-to-air missile systems – for example, of S-300 surface-to-air missile systems near the settlement of Manhush or the deployment of an Osa surface-to-air missile system in a residential area in the settlement of Vidrodzhennia in the Donetsk region.

We appreciate the efforts of the SMM, which is working in Ukraine under difficult conditions. We recall that the monitoring in the conflict zone in Donbas should be carried out in equal measure on both sides of the line of contact. We urge the Mission to stop dividing obstacles into “active” and “passive” ones and to resume the practice of indicating in its reports the number of times it is denied access to areas under the pretext of a threat from mines. As is well known, large swathes of territory controlled by the Ukrainian Government are off limits to the monitors.

Against the background of an uneasy military situation, the political track of the settlement has “frozen over”. The personnel reshuffles in Kyiv have undoubtedly been diverting attention from the immediate political steps that the Ukrainian Government needs to take if it is to “do its homework” and comply with the instructions of the Normandy format summits. These instructions are well known, namely to come to an agreement through direct dialogue with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk regarding all the legal aspects of the special status of Donbas, to make the law on special status permanent and have this reflected in the Constitution of Ukraine, to enact the law on amnesty and to co-ordinate with the representatives of Donbas on the arrangements for holding local elections, among other things.

Incidentally, it is worth recalling how zealously the Ukrainian representatives in the TCG defended the idea that “additional instructions” of some sort were needed from the Normandy Four to make progress in accordance with the “Steinmeier formula” agreed upon at the Normandy format summits. Absolutely clear instructions on that score were given at the Paris summit on 9 December 2019: the formula must be incorporated into Ukrainian legislation in the form in which it was agreed upon in the Normandy format and at the TCG meeting on 1 October. However, this has still not happened.

The Ukrainian authorities continue to tolerate the activities of radical nationalists who are pursuing a racist and xenophobic agenda. A few days ago, the Ukrainian Minister of Infrastructure, Vladyslav Kryklyi, took part in a joint action with ultra-right nationalist organizations at the main railway station in Kyiv. Their raid is said to have been directed against persons earning their living from theft. Yet, the action was clearly xenophobic in nature, since its organizers were focusing exclusively on members of the Roma community. It is also telling that the co-ordinator of the Ukrainian nationalist organization C14, Serhiy Mazur, who participated in the attack on the Roma camp on the Lysa Hora hill in Kyiv in April 2018, was present during that action. Once again, we call on the Ukrainian authorities to distance themselves from the radical nationalists and their hate-inciting slogans. We expect the SMM to pay close attention to this matter, in particular by preparing a thematic report on manifestations of aggressive nationalism, neo-Nazism and xenophobia in Ukraine.

Mr. Chairperson,

In a recent interview with *The Guardian*, the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyi, made a highly ambiguous statement about the need, as he put it, to “move” the points in the Minsk agreements “around a bit”. He threatened to withdraw from the Minsk process within a year if no progress is made on

the settlement. I should like to remind you that it is the Ukrainian Government which holds the “key” to the settlement of the crisis in Donbas. The Ukrainian leadership should refrain from urging those who have no obligations under the Minsk agreements to fulfil them, and it should stop trying to rewrite certain provisions of the agreements.

There is a need to move away from ratcheting up military tension and to intensify direct and responsible dialogue with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. The crisis in eastern Ukraine has no military solution and should be settled by political and diplomatic means through the swift implementation of the provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures (endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202 of 12 February 2015) in full and in a co-ordinated manner.

Thank you for your attention.