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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 996th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

22 April 2014

On the situation in Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson,

The Geneva statement of 17 April is an important step towards reducing tensions in Ukraine. In an extremely difficult and tense situation, it proved possible to agree on a set of initial measures that should help the Ukrainian people themselves to deal with the crisis through peaceful means and avoid irremediable actions with possibly tragic consequences.

We hope that this time the commitments undertaken by the Kyiv authorities in Geneva will be implemented in full. The Mission should assist the central and local authorities, and not be a substitute for them.

For our part, in accordance with the Geneva agreements and together with other members of the international community, we shall continue to provide the necessary assistance, including through the OSCE Mission.

At the same time, we are compelled to note that the implementation of the agreements is under threat owing to the inability and unwillingness of the authorities in Kyiv to put a stop to the violent actions of the Right Sector and other ultranationalists, which have already resulted in casualties. For almost six months now, the Right Sector has been running the show in various cities in central and western Ukraine and attempting to extend its influence to the south-eastern regions by means of force.

The Easter truce was broken in Sloviansk in the early hours of 20 April. Innocent civilians died as a result of an armed attack by militants. This crime only plays into the hands of those who wish to undermine the Geneva agreements.

The Geneva agreements provide for amnesty for those protesters who have left buildings and surrendered their weapons. For now, however, according to information from our Ukrainian colleagues, the draft amnesty law has merely been submitted to the Verkhovna Rada, and it is unclear how long it will be there for. What is more, instead of releasing those who have been arrested, the Kyiv authorities continue to detain political activists from the

south-east. Journalists are subject to arrest and detention. New charges of separatism are being brought.

There are still occupied buildings in Kyiv, and the “Maidan” continues to flourish. Furthermore, the leaders appointed by the Verkhovna Rada openly state that the Geneva agreements do not apply to the Maidan. This is absolutely unacceptable. This means that the main source of instability is being preserved. As with the Right Sector, this is a clear attempt to “legalize” the radicals – instead of being disbanded, they are being given the right to rent premises.

We are grateful for the information regarding Kyiv’s plans for advancing constitutional reform and national dialogue. However, for now these are merely promises, a kind of “declaration of intent”. These questions should be resolved as a matter of priority.

We call on the United States of America and the European Union to work energetically to influence Kyiv and not allow the hotheads there to provoke a bloody conflict and to encourage the current Ukrainian leadership to rigorously implement the commitments it has undertaken, making it possible in this way to begin to de-escalate the situation. We find it very worrying that instead of taking responsibility for what is happening, the authorities in Kyiv are attempting to blame Russia for everything, making up far-fetched, ludicrous stories, without even bothering to substantiate them.

An important requirement of the Geneva agreements is the immediate establishment of broad national dialogue as part of a constitutional process, which must be inclusive, transparent and accountable. All of Ukraine’s regions and political constituencies must be involved in this. It is essential to ensure broad and open discussion of the provisions of the constitution being developed. People must be confident that their wishes will be duly taken into account, instead of being ignored as has often been the case in the past.

First and foremost, this concerns decentralization and a significant expansion of the regions’ powers, including the right to elect legislative and executive bodies, and safeguarding the role of the Russian language in Ukrainian society that is its due.

Competent representatives of the current authorities in Kyiv should be sent immediately to the east and south of the country to engage in dialogue with the popular movements in the regions. This might speed up the process of the surrendering of weapons and vacating of buildings by armed formations, including in the south-east.

De-escalation has to be reciprocal. Protesters in the south-east must be sure that Right Sector militants, the various Maidan units and other radical groups are in fact being disarmed and are not being legalized to return under the guise of the National Guard.

The requirement to refrain from any violence, intimidation or provocative actions also applies in equal measure to those who are now in power in Kyiv and who are giving orders to the armed forces, intelligence agencies and other armed formations like the National Guard. Confidence is not going to return unless the Ukrainian army and security forces withdraw from the eastern regions.

We should like to draw attention once again to the fact that the goal of the Geneva agreements is to facilitate a settlement of the crisis in Ukraine first and foremost by the

Ukrainian people themselves. There should be no attempts at shifting responsibility for this process to anyone else instead of establishing constructive dialogue within the country with the involvement of all the regions and political forces and the entire civil society of Ukraine in all its diversity. The desire on the part of Kyiv to avoid implementing its commitments is unlikely to result in a genuine de-escalation of the current tensions or to resolve the Ukrainian crisis in practice.

Mr. Chairperson,

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine has a central role to play in implementing the Geneva statement. It should assist the “Ukrainian authorities and local communities”.

We welcome the operationalization of the Geneva agreements. Establishing initial contacts with representatives of the protest movement is an important step. We hope this will be developed further. It is also important that the Mission has begun to compile a list of seized buildings. This work must be carried out in all of Ukraine’s regions where such cases have occurred, including in Kyiv.

The Mission has the necessary powers as part of its monitoring to:

- Establish the facts with respect to violence, intimidation, provocative actions and extremism;
- Maintain a record of the process of vacating buildings and surrendering weapons, including amongst the Right Sector;
- Establish the presence and movement of armed formations, including the army and special forces;
- Check whether detained persons are being released in full measure;
- Monitor whether amnesty commitments are being implemented.

The mandate also provides for the establishment of contacts at the local level and the facilitation of dialogue. The Mission can help in establishing contact between Kyiv and popular movements that enjoy real authority and are not simply formally appointed. However, the Mission itself should not be expected to develop the dialogue. This is a matter for the leadership in Kyiv.

As for the actual monitoring, the observers should be present at all key locations in the country where there is a likelihood of “violence, intimidation and provocative actions”. This applies not only to the east and south-east. One key location is Kyiv, including the Verkhovna Rada and the Maidan, until it has been completely cleared.

Given the worrying events in the eastern regions of Ukraine, the Mission’s observers working in other parts of the country seem rather relaxed. The absence of checkpoints and of large numbers of militia and insurgent forces does not mean that nothing is happening there. Of course, even an expanded mission cannot “see everything”. However, the existence of direct contacts with the local population will considerably increase the effectiveness of their

work. In these parts there have been many expressions of the extremism, racism and religious intolerance mentioned in the Geneva agreements. This should be recorded.

We urge the Mission's senior officials to take a more careful approach to matters of public diplomacy. The Ukrainian population has a fairly low level of awareness as regards the OSCE's activities in the country, and they do not yet have the necessary level of confidence in the observers. They are merely "becoming acquainted with one another." For that reason, the strictest observance by the observers of objectivity and impartiality is a matter of fundamental importance and should be reflected in their public statements and press releases. Unfortunately, the press releases being issued at the moment are carbon copies of the Mission's internal reports. The press office's own work is not yet evident. This is not how it should be. Rumours and unverified information should not be reproduced in press releases. The press releases should offer a carefully written, short "compressed overview" of the results of the Mission's activities, as is the case with all OSCE field operations. It goes without saying that the content of these publications is the personal responsibility of the Head of Mission and the OSCE press office.

The observers should not only establish facts but also verify messages received from the population. It is important to seek feedback both from individual citizens and representatives of civil society.

Russia will continue to provide the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission with the necessary support, among other things by sending observers.

We also expect detailed information about the activities of other experts who have been working in Ukraine under the auspices of the OSCE, including the findings and recommendations of the experts from Ambassador Bišćević's team operating under the National Dialogue Project in Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention.