

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1187th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

31 May 2018

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The Ukrainian Government continues to escalate tensions in Donbas, and the price for this is paid in human lives. Between 18 and 25 May, nine people were killed as a result of continued shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces, 17 people were injured and dozens of houses destroyed.

According to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), 110 units of Ukrainian armed forces' military equipment were massed in the security zone during the first two weeks of May. Security forces occupied the disengagement areas of Zolote and Petrivske, turning them into strongholds with military equipment. On 12 May, there was an unsuccessful attempt by the Ukrainian armed forces to break through near Horlivka using tanks. The SMM reported that four civilians were killed, two were injured and houses were damaged as a result of massive shelling of Horlivka and its suburbs (Zaitseve) between 11 and 22 May. The reports dated 24 and 26 May confirm that the Ukrainian armed forces shelled Horlivka using 152 mm Akatsiya self-propelled howitzers from the village of Romanivka.

A critical situation has developed around the Donetsk filtration station, which provides water to half a million people on both sides of the line of contact. The Ukrainian armed forces have set themselves the goal of seizing this infrastructure facility. They are now less than 70 metres away from the filtration station. They shell it on a daily basis (including, today 31 May) and obstruct access for workers. There needs to be an immediate disengagement of forces near the filtration station. The militia are ready to do this, but the Ukrainian Government is not. At yesterday's meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), the Ukrainian Government's representatives rejected the proposals by Ertuğrul Apakan (six points) for stabilizing the situation around the Donetsk filtration station.

Fresh provocations occurred on 22 May. As the SMM has confirmed, a centre for social assistance and administrative services in militia-controlled territory near Stanytsia

Luhanska suffered damage as a result of shelling. On the same day, two civilians were injured when a bridge collapsed after being blown up by Ukrainian saboteurs on the outskirts of Ivanivka.

Civilians in territory controlled by the Ukrainian Government are also suffering as a result of the security forces' actions. The Ukrainian armed forces have occupied hospitals in the city of Toretsk and a factory in Talakivka. As a result, civilians find themselves in a hostage situation because these settlements have been turned into a theatre of military operations.

The only way to achieve de-escalation is to ensure a ceasefire and the withdrawal of hardware in accordance with the Minsk Package of Measures, along with the disengagement of forces and demining, as stipulated in the TCG decisions. The Principal Deputy Chief Monitor of the SMM, Mr. Alexander Hug, spoke about this at the briefing in Vienna on 22 May. It was also discussed at the extraordinary meeting of the TCG Working Group on Security Issues on 23 May, but Ukraine sabotaged the negotiations and rejected the SMM's proposals.

The Ukrainian Government is focused on confrontation. It has opted for a policy of undermining the work to resolve the crisis and unleashing full-scale military operations similar to those of 2014. On 28 May, tanks and artillery were moved towards the line of contact in Dzerzhynsk. On 29 May, Ukrainian military aircraft took to the skies above Donetsk. The press centre of the punitive "Combined Forces Operation" command announced the "preparation of all troops and hardware for performing their assigned tasks".

The international community should not turn a blind eye to such actions. It is time for the forces of common sense in Europe to consider whether it is worth giving unconditional support to the policy of those who, under the current conditions, are supplying weapons to Ukraine and training members of the Ukrainian punitive battalions.

The Ukrainian Government is trying to hide the real state of affairs from its citizens and the international community. It has stepped up propaganda regarding the imagined "Russian aggression". It is crudely cleansing the information space. Ukraine is rapidly slipping into totalitarianism.

On 18 May, the Ukrainian armed forces deliberately opened fire on an All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company (VGTRK) film crew, which was preparing a reportage near the village of Kruta Balka. The Russian journalist Pavel Vydrin and sound engineer Igor Uklein were injured. On 24 May, the Ukrainian authorities shut down the Russian news agencies Rossiya Segodnya and RIA Novosti Ukraine for three years. Despite the condemnation of this discriminatory act by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, a number of key human rights non-governmental organizations and journalistic associations, access to these Russian news agencies' websites has been blocked. A court in Kherson postponed the consideration of the appeal against the arrest of the head of RIA Novosti Ukraine, Kirill Vyshinsky. On 26 May, the Ukrainian border service prevented two Russian media workers from entering the country.

What happened with the Russian journalist Arkady Babchenko is simply beyond belief. As you know, yesterday 30 May, the Ukrainian Security Service announced that the

reporter was actually alive and that his fake murder had been staged as part of some covert operation.

We are of course glad that this Russian citizen is alive. However, we believe it is inadmissible to use false information, especially when it concerns a human life, for blatant propaganda ploys.

The reports about Arkady Babchenko's death in Ukraine misled the entire global community. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Harlem Désir, even travelled to Kyiv to support the journalist's colleagues and found himself in an extremely embarrassing situation.

Using the information supplied by the Ukrainian Government, several media outlets and bloggers wasted no time in accusing Russia of a murder that had not happened. This is an extremely telling demonstration of how powerful these groundless anti-Russian stereotypes are.

This whole circus was staged instead of investigating the real murders in Ukraine of the journalists Anatoly Klyan, Anton Voloshin, Igor Kornelyuk, Andrei Stenin, Oles Buzina, Pavel Sheremet and other media workers, as well as the deaths of the people who were burned alive in Odessa.

The confidence of the international community in the policies of the Ukrainian Government has been seriously undermined. We firmly believe that the participating States, the OSCE institutions, the journalistic community and the relevant international institutions will draw the appropriate conclusions from this situation.

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation in the rest of Ukraine is depressing. National minorities are having their rights trampled upon. Like the Russian-speaking population, they have been deprived of the opportunity to receive education in their native language without hindrance. The children of Crimean Tatars have to organize classes of at least five pupils to preserve their national identity. Ethnically motivated crimes continue. According to the SMM, Right Sector radicals attacked members of the Roma community near Velyki Hai village (Ivano-Frankivsk region) on 22 May. They burned down the Roma tent camp and fired shots into the ground right next to little children.

The authorities are encouraging the nationalists. On 28 May, red and black flags of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and Ukrainian Insurgent Army were raised near administrative buildings in Lviv to mark nationalist day pursuant to a decision by the city council. The glorification of Nazism and the rise of radical nationalism and extremism in Ukraine demand an urgent response from the international community. We are waiting for a dedicated report by the SMM.

The number of crimes in the military sphere is growing. Ukraine's military prosecutor, Anatoly Matios, announced at an international conference in Kharkiv that 27,000 criminal cases had been opened against 43,000 Ukrainian military personnel since April 2014. This is just the tip of the iceberg, if we assume that most crimes have been

hushed up and concealed by commanders. The current escalation of the situation in Donbas is apparently aimed at overcoming the disintegration of the Ukrainian army.

The Ukrainian authorities explain the dissatisfaction with the policy of the Ukrainian Government among certain sections of the population as “hybrid warfare”. This is precisely how the situation in the Kherson region was described a few days ago by the Ukrainian official, Boris Babin, who spoke of “signs of the loss of State control” in border areas.

There are clear signs of a growing domestic political crisis in Ukraine. The deported ex-governor of the Odessa region, Mikheil Saakashvili, is urging the European Union to impose sanctions on President Petro Poroshenko. The jailed former hero of Ukraine, Nadiya Savchenko, wrote on Facebook that she got caught in the wheels of the authoritarian political machine in Ukraine. Even disgraced radicals are seeking help in Europe. On 18 May, Serhiy Melnychuk, organizer of the Aidar punitive battalion and an independent member of the Verkhovna Rada, speaking at the Vienna Diplomatic Academy, said that he had fallen victim to a campaign waged by Mr. Poroshenko and the oligarchs. As the elections in Ukraine approach, the divisions in society will only get worse.

All of this directly affects the prospects for a settlement of the internal Ukrainian conflict. In order to resolve the problem, it is necessary to force the Ukrainian Government to abandon its propagandistic rhetoric and begin real steps towards de-escalation.

The only way to achieve a settlement is through direct dialogue by the Ukrainian Government with Donetsk and Luhansk and systematic implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures. Attempts to distort and manipulate the provisions of this document, which has been endorsed by the United Nations Security Council, are unacceptable. Efforts to delegitimize the representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, who are signatories to the Minsk agreements, are no less counter-productive. Talk of replacing the OSCE monitors with an armed peacekeeping presence is not in the interests of a settlement. The idea of establishing a protectorate in Donbas by creating an international administration is unacceptable.

Thank you for your attention.