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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1204th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 November 2018

**On the Ukrainian military provocation in the Black Sea and
violation of international law**

Mr. Chairperson,

On the eve of the presidential election in Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko has embarked on a dangerous provocation in the Black Sea with the aim of creating an international scandal.

On 25 November, three Ukrainian navy vessels illegally crossed the Russian State border, headed towards the Kerch Strait, failed to respond to the legitimate demands made by ships and motorboats of the Russian Federal Security Service border guards and the Russian Black Sea Fleet, and carried out a dangerous manoeuvre, posing a threat to regular shipping traffic in these waters. These acts were committed in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law, including Articles 19 and 21 of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, defining the right of the coastal State to ensure its security at sea, and also the rules of innocent passage in the territorial waters of the Russian Federation in the Black Sea. We regard such steps as a violation of Russia's sovereignty. These illegal actions left the Russian border guards with no choice but to use force. Casualties could be avoided thanks to their restraint and high level of professionalism. The three Ukrainian military personnel injured in the incident were provided with the necessary medical assistance, and their lives are not at risk. The intruding vessels were seized and are now in a Russian port. Criminal proceedings have been instituted.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is clear that the incident of 25 November in the Black Sea was a carefully considered and planned provocation in keeping with the Ukrainian Government's deliberate policy of stoking tension in the region. All of this was aimed at artificially exacerbating the tensions between Russia and Ukraine and creating new pretexts for arguing in favour of new sanctions against Russia.

Over the past few months, with the support of the Government of the United States of America, the Ukrainian Government has been aggressively stirring up the issue of the

“militarization” of the Sea of Azov. Our country has been repeatedly blamed without any proof, as is customary now in the West. All this has been done to create another controversial narrative and cobble together a fake scare story involving Russia.

The fact is, however, that Russia has no plans to establish a new naval base in the Sea of Azov. The military forces and hardware there are commensurate with the task of protecting the Crimean Bridge. The inspection of Ukrainian vessels passing through the Kerch Strait generally takes three hours at the most and is the legal right of the Russian border guards to ensure security in Russia’s territorial waters in the light of the threats by Ukrainian radicals, who have promised to blow up the Crimean Bridge.

The escalation of the situation in the Azov-Kerch region is part of the strategy of the current regime’s battle for power in Kyiv, aimed at diverting the Ukrainian population’s attention from domestic policy problems – and there are a lot of them. It needs somehow to justify the continuing war crimes by the Ukrainian security forces, the failure by Ukraine to implement the Minsk Package of Measures, and the restriction of the constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens, including freedom of speech, assembly and association.

The declaration of martial law, in the event that it enters into force, poses a threat to security in Donbas. The Ukrainian Government’s policy of provoking tension has been confirmed by recent events. The Ukrainian armed forces have moved BUK and S-300 surface-to-air missile systems and Grad and Uragan multiple-launch rocket systems closer to the line of contact. They are blocking the disengagement of forces in Stanytsia Luhanska. They have sent soldiers into the disengagement areas in Zolote and Petrivske. On 24 November, troops from the 72nd Brigade of the Ukrainian armed forces captured the village of Rozsadyky in the Svitlodark salient, as the command headquarters of the “Combined Forces Operation” officially announced. The shelling of settlements has intensified. As a result, a civilian (date of birth 1956) was injured in Olenivka on 21 November, and on 24 November part of Horlivka was left without electricity. There have been reports of training for provocative acts by the Ukrainian armed forces with the use of chemical weapons and the involvement of foreign intelligence services.

The decisions taken in Kyiv in fact give free rein to radical nationalists, who continue their anti-Russian antics without hindrance. The police looked on as rampaging thugs carried out their latest attack on the Russian embassy in Kyiv. A diplomatic vehicle was set on fire last night. Radicals threaten to storm the diplomatic missions. Nationalists threw flares at the office of the consulate general in Kharkiv and set fire to tyres in front of the consulate general building in Lviv. We demand that Ukraine ensure the unconditional inviolability of the Russian embassy and consulates general in Ukraine in accordance with the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and bring those responsible for the attacks to justice.

We warn Ukraine that the policy it is pursuing in co-ordination with the United States and the European Union with the aim of provoking a conflict with Russia is fraught with serious consequences. We will resolutely curb any attempts to encroach on the sovereignty and security of the Russian Federation.

Thank you for your attention.