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**STATEMENT BY  
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REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE  
1068th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 September 2015

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the stabilization of the security situation in Donbas along the line of contact separating the parties. The number of incidents remains at a fairly low level. This situation needs to be exploited in order to make the ceasefire a sustainable and lasting one. The most effective way of doing this is to sign an agreement on the withdrawal of tanks, artillery under 100 mm in calibre and mortars under 120 mm in calibre as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, it has still not been possible to reach an agreement. We urge Ukraine to take a more constructive position. It goes without saying that Point 2 of the Package of Measures regarding the withdrawal of heavy weapons also needs to be fully implemented.

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) should play a key role in monitoring the implementation of the agreements on the withdrawal of weapons. In order to do this, the number of monitors needs to be increased as does the frequency of their patrols along the entire line of contact, especially in the most problematic areas. We need to literally “saturate” the security zone with monitors, *inter alia* through the organization of 24-hour observation posts, and provide them with the necessary technical equipment.

These proposals received the full support of the Normandy format foreign ministers during the meeting in Berlin on 12 September.

Unfortunately, it is of course still too early to speak of complete stabilization. The SMM reports show that Ukrainian heavy equipment is being moved around in the security zone, while artillery continues to disappear from storage depots. According to the SMM, between 10 and 15 September 34 units of military equipment went missing from Ukrainian armed forces’ depots; during the same period the Ukrainian armed forces violated the ceasefire on 61 occasions. There are reports of the continuing massing of forces in the security zone.

We expect a thematic report from the Mission on the targets of shelling and its impact on the civilian population.

We have noted that a significant number of incidents on the side of the line of contact controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces are a result of infighting between various groups of Ukrainian security forces. Official representatives of the Ukrainian authorities admitted that the incident in the Luhansk region in which several Ukrainian military personnel were killed, which was mentioned at one of the recent meetings, was the result of an internal struggle to control smuggling. This is a direct consequence of the blockade of the region established by Kyiv. Too many people want to make a profit from the suffering of ordinary citizens.

The threat posed by mines, which not only endanger the civilian population and make it difficult for them to cross the line of contact but also hinder the work of SMM monitors and humanitarian organizations, is a serious problem. There need to be increased efforts to open additional crossing points on the line of contact as this would make things considerably easier for civilian population. The results of the work of the subgroup on economic issues and the agreement on reconstruction work give rise to a certain degree of optimism. A recent thematic report by the SMM on water supply issues in Donbas reveals the severity of this problem. It needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency, especially as winter draws closer.

Mr. Chairperson,

There have been hints from various sources over the past week that the Minsk agreements are allegedly unworkable and that no formal steps should be taken towards their implementation. In that connection, I should like to unequivocally stress that there is no alternative to the Package of Measures endorsed by the corresponding United Nations Security Council resolution. It should be implemented in full and in the order set out in the document in question. There's no doubt about it that Kyiv's attempts to interpret or distort the Package of Measures for its own benefit are a departure from the agreements reached in the five-party format.

A key condition for the implementation of the Package of Measures' provision on holding local elections in Donbas under Ukrainian law is Kyiv's direct dialogue with representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk.

We keep on quoting the provisions of Point 12 of the Package of Measures. "On the basis of the Law of Ukraine on the temporary procedure for local self-governance in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, questions related to local elections shall be discussed and agreed upon with representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group." This means that the elections must first be agreed upon on the basis of the aforementioned law, which is not in force, and then held.

These provisions need to be clarified in detail as we are hearing something different from Kyiv and several of our colleagues. First of all, it is said that there must be representatives of Donbas who are acceptable to Kyiv and then they will reach agreement with them on all the other questions, including amendments to the Constitution regarding decentralization taking into account the specificities of certain regions of Donbas, laws on elections in certain areas and on the amnesty, and so on.

The proposals by the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic on the election law were transmitted to Ukraine a long time ago; they were on the negotiating table during the last meeting of the subgroup on political issues on 15 and 16 September. We welcome the efforts of the OSCE co-ordinator of this subgroup, Mr. Pierre Morel, who put forward compromise solutions. All of Kyiv's efforts, on the other hand, were aimed at preventing any elections from being held in Donbas at all. The Ukrainian leadership is therefore stubbornly continuing to avoid substantive dialogue.

As for the alarmist statements made about elections in the Donetsk People's Republic arguing that they would allegedly undermine the Minsk Agreements, I should like to draw attention to the fact that Kyiv itself refused to hold elections in Donbas in accordance with the Package of Measures. There is a corresponding presidential decree to this effect.

We are confident that as soon as Kyiv switches from pretend to real dialogue, all the necessary questions regarding the holding of elections in accordance with Ukrainian law and the relevant OSCE standards and with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights observing them, as stipulated in the Package of Measures, will be quickly settled.

We understand that this is a difficult task for Kyiv. First it needs to agree on modalities for holding elections in the Contact Group and then adopt the relevant legislative solutions in the Verkhovna Rada. However, Kyiv set these conditions for itself, in trying to pass off unilateral steps as allegedly implementing the Minsk agreements.

As it is, all of Kyiv's actions in terms of implementing the political part of the Minsk agreements remain a sham. The amendments to the Constitution do not take into account the specificities of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and were not agreed upon with their representatives, as required by the Package of Measures.

We urge that the release of prisoners and illegally detained persons and their exchange on the basis of the principle of "all for all" should not be forgotten either. Progress towards national reconciliation in Ukraine is impossible without the amnesty law, no matter how painful this may be for the inhabitants of Donbas who suffered as a result of the so-called counter-terrorist but essentially punitive operation by Kyiv. There are already around 8,000 deaths (7,962 to be precise) and around 18,000 wounded (17,811 to be exact) on the conscience of those who instigated that reckless venture. This is according to the conservative estimates by Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. Millions of people have been forced to flee their homes; thousands have been harassed because of "domestic separatism".

Stabilizing the security situation is an important step towards implementing the relevant provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures. A window of opportunity has appeared now and it must be exploited.

Thank you for your attention.