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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY RUDENKO,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1072nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

22 October 2015

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We continue to believe that clear and systematic implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures in good faith is of the utmost importance for the settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. There is no alternative to these agreements for a peaceful resolution of the situation, and direct dialogue by Kyiv with Donetsk and Luhansk is needed to achieve real and sustainable results on the ground.

Our common task is to promote a sustainable stabilization of the situation on the line of contact. We believe that communication between the parties in the subgroup on security issues and also with representatives of the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination should be more systematic and less politicized. The fact that Ukraine refused to participate in a videoconference last week to clarify the circumstances of the shelling of Donetsk suburbs on 10 October is counter-productive in our view. Every effort needs to be made to prevent incidents like the recent attack on the Volvo centre and clashes near Donetsk airport.

We hope that the adoption of rules of procedure for the Trilateral Contact Group and its subgroups will enable this mechanism to work more effectively.

We are still waiting for a report from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) on the targets and consequences of the shelling of towns and villages on both sides of the line of contact.

The fact that the parties have begun to implement the second stage of the agreement on the withdrawal of tanks, mortars and small-calibre weapons is a milestone towards stabilizing the situation in Donbas. We note that the withdrawal of tanks and other equipment from the southern districts of Donbas has started. We trust that this process will go smoothly, and the deadlines will be met.

We support the efforts of the SMM monitors, who are faced, under difficult circumstances, with the important task of verifying the withdrawal of weapons.

In that connection, they must not restrict themselves to merely verifying the lists of tank and gun inventory numbers, inspecting storage depots and installing surveillance equipment there. Given the importance of a sustainable ceasefire, the SMM monitors should pay greater attention to making sure there are no weapons in the security zone and recording any attempts to move them there.

As for monitoring territory outside the security zone, this should be done on both sides of the line of contact on an equal basis. The same applies to technical equipment, including drones, which according to SMM reports are also being jammed over territory controlled by the Ukrainian security forces.

It is important to make progress in resolving political issues at the same time as safeguarding the ceasefire regime. We welcome the intensification of contacts within the relevant working subgroup and expect concrete results. We are convinced that Kyiv can find the political will to reach a constructive agreement with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk on the modalities for holding local elections in Donbas, as required by the Minsk Package of Measures, and also have this embodied in the relevant Ukrainian law. This time it must be effective and not surrounded with artificial conditions, which is what happened with the so-called law on special status. Implementing the substantive provisions of the aforementioned law on special status is Kyiv's responsibility; no one else can do this for it.

Unfortunately, it is not only the Ukrainian representatives but also those who did not sign their names in Minsk but make out that they know best about the essence of the agreements who are guilty of a selective and incorrect interpretation of the Package of Measures. Restoring complete control of the State border by the Government of Ukraine throughout the conflict zone, which some people mistakenly refer to as the main issue of the settlement, can take place only once the constitutional process in Ukraine has been completed. The rights of the inhabitants of Donbas must be enshrined in law and guaranteed – read Point 11 of the Minsk Package of Measures carefully. This is the root of the problem, and until this is resolved Kyiv's control of the border will have no effect.

So far Kyiv has been unable to establish order even on the segment of the State border under its control – the border with Crimea. As we can see, members of Right Sector and mafia groups are involved in extortion there, blocking freight traffic and conducting explosive experiments with electricity pylons. The question is not even whether this is appropriate, but how this reflects the current Ukrainian idea of legality.

Unfortunately, unnatural activities like this are also typical of the blockade of Donbas. The attempt to “punish” the region's population through hunger and by turning off the water supply and hindering the delivery of medicines does nothing to promote national reconciliation. The blockade must be lifted. This would solve a considerable number of problems. Efforts must be stepped up to solve practical issues – restoring power lines, water supply and railway links, and working to remove the threat posed by mines.

The amnesty question is also of fundamental importance. Many of our colleagues also forget this. However, unless this issue is resolved it will be extremely difficult to overcome

the conflict within civil society, achieve political stability in the country and ensure that elections are held. This does not just concern Donbas either.

In conclusion, we should like to draw attention to how preparations are being made in Ukraine for the local elections, which should take place this Sunday. Strange things are happening in Kharkiv, where they are refusing to register one of the opposition leaders. For incomprehensible reasons, the holding of elections in Mariupol is in doubt. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) notes that the law does not provide for voting by internally displaced persons. The Communist Party of Ukraine has been banned. Various militia groups are interfering in the electoral process. A candidate for the post of mayor has been beaten up in Dnipropetrovsk, and a party activist killed.

And this, to all appearances, is just the tip of the iceberg. We shall carefully monitor whether these points that were mentioned in the ODIHR's interim report are reflected in the observation mission's report on the election results.

Thank you for your attention.