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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1156th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

31 August 2017

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The announcement of a “school truce” beginning on 25 August to coincide with the start of the new academic year was agreed upon in the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk by the representatives of the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk. This decision was supported in a joint statement by the leaders of the Normandy quartet countries.

Despite this, the Ukrainian security forces have not stopped their provocative shelling of towns and villages in Donbas along the line of contact.

We call on the Ukrainian Government to ensure strict observance of the ceasefire regime by all the units involved in combat operations against the population of Donbas, in line with the commitments undertaken in the Trilateral Contact Group.

What is particularly worrying is the shelling of firefighters and rescue workers, the frequent cases of roads and important facilities being mined by Ukrainian commandos, and the increase in sniper activity at the line of contact, which resulted in a man being injured in the Petrovsky district of Donetsk.

We call on the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) to study the consequences of the shelling more closely, keep statistics indicating whether the targets were civilian or military, and try to identify who was doing the shooting.

We are obliged to note that the crucial process of the disengagement of the parties’ forces and hardware has come to a standstill. The Ukrainian Government systematically refuses to adhere to its commitments regarding the withdrawal of forces in the agreed area in Stanytsia Luhanska. The implementation of this agreement would allow the parties to begin agreeing on additional disengagement areas at the line of contact. We regard the disengagement of the parties’ forces at the line of contact as a vital condition for ensuring an effective and lasting ceasefire.

We see no willingness on the part of the Ukrainian Government to put into practice the political aspects of the Package of Measures. We would remind you, in particular, that they provide for granting special status to Donbas and enshrining this in Ukrainian law and the Constitution, for agreement with Donetsk and Luhansk of modalities for local elections, and for the holding of such elections monitored by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. We also recall that point 5 of the Package of Measures provides for pardon and amnesty through the enactment of a law prohibiting the prosecution and punishment of persons in connection with the conflict. The next point is the release of detained persons, based on the principle “all for all”.

It should not be forgotten that the basic condition for a comprehensive settlement of the Ukrainian crisis is the question of the special status of Donbas and its enshrinement in the Constitution and the law.

The law on the specific characteristics of local self-government of certain areas of Donbas, which contains a number of provisions also reflected in the Package of Measures, has not been implemented. It still has a temporary rather than a permanent character. However, even this law may cease to exist in October of this year. There is currently much talk in the corridors of the Verkhovna Rada of some kind of “law on reintegration”. If the law contravenes the Minsk agreements, it will strike an irreversible blow to the entire settlement process.

At the same time, the Ukrainian Government’s representatives in the Trilateral Contact Group are refusing to set out on paper the Steinmeier formula agreed upon in the Normandy format. There are no signs that the Ukrainian Government intends to lift the economic blockade of Donbas.

All of this confirms the Ukrainian Government’s unchanging policy of sabotaging the Minsk agreements and, consequently, its interest in continuing the armed conflict.

Distinguished colleagues,

The SMM mandate includes monitoring and supporting the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, and supporting the observance of these rights in the different regions of Ukraine. Given the resources available to the Mission, this has received unreasonably little attention.

Double standards are unacceptable, especially when it is a question of manifestations of neo-Nazism, intolerance and discrimination. We have seen torchlit marches, symbols, slogans, hate-filled propaganda, and the rehabilitation or glorification of Nazism and its supporters in various countries. In some countries these events are condemned and in others they are silently tolerated. The manifestations of extremism and hate-filled propaganda widely practised by members of movements such as Svoboda, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, Azov and the Right Sector require determined, loud and unequivocal condemnation. If our colleagues are true to their principles, they need to do this without further delay.

It is inadmissible to keep silent about the problem of the freedom and safety of journalists in Ukraine, where the desire for European values is proclaimed in words, but in practice we see only the worst examples of notorious double standards regarding the media.

No less important is the fact that media workers frequently become targets and victims of the use of force. Let me give you a glaring recent example of this. On 30 August, a group of journalists who had arrived in Yasynuvata to report on the “school truce” came under fire from Ukrainian soldiers. Media workers going about their professional business frequently put their lives at serious risk. Everyone is familiar with the Mirotvorets website overseen by the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs, which publishes personal details about people disliked by the Ukrainian extremists. Recently, the Russian journalist, Maxim Dodonov, a participant in the dialogue between Russian and Ukrainian media representatives organized with the support of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, was added to that list.

The situation regarding the Ukrainian Orthodox Church remains complicated. Another place of worship belonging to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was recently seized in the village of Divyehky in the Kyiv region.

In conclusion, we should like to confirm once again that we regard the Minsk agreements as the only way of resolving the crisis. They need to be implemented in full without losing sight of the goal of a comprehensive political settlement.

As long as the Ukrainian authorities do not show any political will to move in this direction, the prospects for a settlement remain illusory. For our part, we are ready to provide all the necessary assistance for effective direct dialogue by the Ukrainian parties in the Trilateral Contact Group and also to help to facilitate a swift settlement of the crisis within the framework of the Normandy format. We trust that the other participants will also take all the necessary measures to encourage the parties to exercise restraint and observe the “school truce”.

Thank you for your attention.