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AT THE 1255th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

16 January 2020

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation in Ukraine, which is being torn apart by a multitude of internal conflicts, is being exacerbated by the actions of radical nationalists. Events were held there on 1 January to mark the anniversary of the birth of the Nazi collaborator and leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), Stepan Bandera. He not only discredited himself by supporting terrorist acts in the name of radical nationalist ideas, but also led an organization, the combat wing of which merged with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UIA) established in 1942. I would remind you that, as part of the SS Galicia Division and the Nachtigall Battalion, members of the UIA participated in punitive operations against the Jewish, Polish, Russian and Ukrainian population during the Second World War. The SS and its structures received a clear legal and historical assessment at the Nuremberg Tribunal.

There are now attempts to impose the odious figure of Stepan Bandera on the entire country as a national hero despite the fact that opinions on him in Ukraine are split, which leads only to a deepening of social division. The events arranged by radical nationalist organizations in his honour on 1 January were held with Nazi-style torchlit processions and accompanied by xenophobic slogans. In a number of municipalities, including Kyiv, they were held with the support of the local authorities. Russia, Israel and Poland once again expressed their concern about the participation of government officials in the glorification of the Nazi collaborator, Stepan Bandera.

Against this background, representatives of the Ukrainian Government not only persistently vote against United Nations General Assembly resolutions on combating glorification of Nazism, but also cultivate nationalism among young people. For example, the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine will allocate 9 million hryvnias in 2020 to fund public organizations that glorify the OUN-UIA, such as the Plast National Scout Organization and the Youth Nationalist Congress, and also events with a nationalist bias, such as the Bandershtat music festival. Comments by television presenters on national television calling for residents of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions to be deprived of their Ukrainian citizenship because of their way of thinking also receive no legal evaluation from the Ukrainian law enforcement authorities, nor do hateful publications arguing that “Russian-speaking children must disappear as a species” in Ukraine (these were the words of the Ukrainian television presenter Ostap Drozdov).

Manifestations of aggressive nationalism, neo-Nazism and xenophobia in Ukrainian society are hardly surprising given these conditions. A graphic example, which was recently reported by the Ukrainian Jewish Committee, was the attack by knife-wielding radicals on Jewish pilgrims in the city of Uman in the Cherkasy region on 10 January. We call on the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) to record such manifestations of hatred and anti-Semitism and catalogue this information in a thematic report.

In order to provide a better understanding of who the new “heroes” of Ukraine – Stepan Bandera, Roman Shukhevych and the like – really were, we are attaching some brief information on this topic.

Mr. Chairperson,

Signs of de-escalation have been observed in Donbas since the start of the new year. This was preceded by the implementation of an agreement between the Ukrainian Government, Donetsk and Luhansk on the exchange on 29 December 2019 of detained persons according to the principle of “all identified for all identified”. It is difficult to overestimate the importance in humanitarian terms of this step, which became possible following the December summit of the “Normandy format” leaders. In the run-up to the New Year’s holiday and Christmas, 200 people were able to be reunited with their families and celebrate the holidays together with their relatives and friends. We trust that the Ukrainian Government will fulfil the guarantees given to the representatives of Donbas regarding the legal and procedural clearance of those released and will not allow them to be prosecuted again. It is important to maintain contact between the representatives of the Ukrainian Government and Donbas in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) so as to carry out the exchange according to the principle of “all for all”, as provided for in paragraph 6 of the Minsk Package of Measures.

Military tension has diminished. However, skirmishes have not stopped completely. This continues to have a negative effect on the general humanitarian situation. The SMM records several hundred instances of shelling each day. Today, this figure is close to reaching the 500 mark within 24 hours. On 6 January, the Ukrainian armed forces used weapons that are prohibited under the Minsk agreements on three occasions.

Civilians and civilian infrastructure facilities remain targets for the Ukrainian military. The city of Kirovsk in the Luhansk region came under fire on 10 January. One civilian was injured and several buildings damaged. There are problems in the Petrivske disengagement area. We trust that the parties will manage to agree at today’s TCG meeting in Minsk on effective measures to implement the agreement on a full and comprehensive ceasefire that was reached back in mid-July 2019 and endorsed by the participants in the “Normandy format”, notably at the recent summit.

The SMM has reported obstacles to the work of its unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). A typical incident occurred on 10 January near the Ukrainian Government-controlled settlement of Orikhove in the Luhansk region, where a mini UAV fell into the hands of the Ukrainian military after it was jammed. It was then returned to the Mission with its memory card completely erased. This kind of interference in the work of the SMM’s technical devices is unacceptable and demonstrates a desire to hide military activities from the Mission. On 11 January, shots were fired at another mini UAV near Ukrainian armed forces’ positions in the settlement of Novoluhanske in the Donetsk region.

Last week, a sad list of the casualties of the ongoing socio-economic and transport blockade of Donbas was started. The checkpoint regime at the line of contact, which goes hand in hand with the restrictions imposed by the Ukrainian Government, forces many residents of the region to stand in line for hours. Pensioners are the most vulnerable group. Most of them, as is well known, travel to Ukrainian Government-controlled territory to visit relatives or receive the social benefits owed to them.

According to the data available, on 4 January a female resident of Perevalsk died at a checkpoint near Horlivka. The SMM confirmed the death of an elderly man on 9 January near the checkpoint in Stanytsia Luhanska. We urge the Ukrainian Government to step up work as soon as possible with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk in the TCG so that urgent steps can be taken to improve the throughput capacity at the line of contact and agree on new disengagement areas, allowing consideration to be given to the opening of new checkpoints. Incidentally, the Ukrainian Government avoided substantive discussions on disengagement at the TCG meeting on 18 December, unlike the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk, who put forward their suggestions. Ukraine should implement its socio-economic obligations provided for under paragraph 8 of the Package of Measures.

The achievement of peace in Donbas is impossible without a political settlement. The procedure for this was clearly set out in the Package of Measures and endorsed by the “Normandy format” and the UN Security Council. Granting Donbas special status on a permanent basis with amendments made to the Constitution is a foundation stone. The recent one-year extension of the law on the special status of Donbas, which has still not entered into force, sends a positive signal. However, this is only a temporary measure, which does not ensure the application of that law or a viable solution to the problem in general. The “Steinmeier formula” on the procedure for the enactment of the aforementioned law has still not been implemented in Ukrainian legislation, although it was agreed on by the Ukrainian Government in the TCG on 1 October 2019.

As for the draft law on constitutional amendments regarding decentralization, this in fact has nothing to do with the political part of the Minsk agreements but is a set of measures for the administrative and territorial rearrangement of the country. The provisions provided for in paragraph 11 of the Minsk Package of Measures are not reflected in it and it makes no mention of the special status of Donbas becoming permanent.

We should not forget about the amnesty for those involved in the events in Donbas, which the Ukrainian authorities are obliged to grant but have not yet done so.

We repeat that the path to peace in Ukraine lies in the implementation of the Package of Measures as soon as possible. So far, we have heard very contradictory statements from the Ukrainian Government regarding the future of the Minsk process. In a recent interview with the German newspaper *Bild*, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Vadym Prystaiko discussed the search for some “alternatives to Minsk”, which at the same time “would not mean leaving the Minsk process”. This sounds very strange indeed. We wish to caution against attempts to distort the essence of the Minsk agreements or devalue their importance completely as the main instrument for resolving the internal Ukrainian crisis.

We trust that the visit to Ukraine by the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama, scheduled for 20 and 21 January, will have a positive effect on the implementation of the Package of Measures. We urge the Chairperson-in-Office not to limit his trip to the territories controlled by the Ukrainian Government but also to visit certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions on the other side of the line of contact. This will make it possible to see and assess the real consequences of the ongoing military operation by the Ukrainian Government in Donbas.

Thank you for your attention.

On the Ukrainian Nazi collaborators Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych

Here are some facts from the biographies of Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych, the leaders of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UIA), so revered in Ukraine nowadays.

Stepan Bandera worked closely with the Nazi military intelligence unit Abwehr II and was an ideologue of the so-called Ukrainian nationalist revolution. At different periods in his life he was engaged in sabotage against the Polish authorities and behind Red Army lines, as well as establishing regular radio communications with the Nazi Abwehr. He participated in the training and ideological indoctrination of OUN sabotage units. Paramilitary formations of Ukrainian nationalists who professed Bandera's ideology participated in the massacres of Jews in Lviv and its environs in 1941. Subsequently, similar ethnic cleansing and mass extermination of the Polish and Jewish population took place in the territories of Volhynia and Polesia.

Roman Shukhevych collaborated with Nazi Germany. He was a professional terrorist and saboteur. During the Great Patriotic War, he served Hitler's Germany as a captain of the Wehrmacht. In 1941 and 1942 Shukhevych served in armed units of the Third Reich. He was a commander of the Ukrainian unit of the Nachtigall Battalion (Ukrainian Legion) and a deputy commander of the 201st Schutzmannschaft Battalion. From 1943 he was the leader of the so-called Ukrainian Insurgent Army. He participated in the killing of more than 2,000 Soviet partisans. In 1941, during Operation Barbarossa, together with the Wehrmacht he took part in the invasion of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, operating as part of the Brandenburg Regiment. In July 1941, the Nachtigall Battalion under Shukhevych's command took part in a mass punitive action (pogrom) against the population of Lviv. The barbaric murders, shocking in their brutality, of elderly people, women and children during the tragedy known as the Volhynia massacre – ethnic cleansing with manifest signs of genocide – are on the conscience of Shukhevych, who was leading his unit.