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Delegation of France

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR CHRISTINE FAGES,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE TO THE OSCE,
AT THE 1301st MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 February 2021

Right of reply on behalf of France and Germany

France aligns itself with the statement by the European Union.

On behalf of France and Germany, I should like to make a number of clarifications following the statement made by the Russian delegation.

First, regarding Russia's responsibility for settling this conflict, I would recall that the Minsk agreements remain the only framework for the settlement of this conflict. All of these agreements were signed on behalf of the Russian Federation by its official representative. Russia thus clearly and bindingly accepted its responsibility for a peaceful settlement of the conflict and the implementation of the provisions of this agreement.

Regarding consultation of representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, this is explicitly provided for only in paragraphs 9, 11 (constitutional reform, legislation on the special status) and 12 (local elections) of the Package of Measures. The text makes no mention of the need to establish "direct dialogue" between the Government of Ukraine and the separatists. The Minsk Protocol is unambiguous. I quote: "[T]he Trilateral Contact Group [consists] of representatives of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)." It is chaired by the OSCE.

Rather than rejecting all responsibility for the impasse on Ukraine, Russia should show a constructive approach and assume its responsibilities, within both the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG). We also urge it to make greater use of the influence it has on the *de facto* representatives of the areas not controlled by the Ukrainian Government.

France and Germany welcome the progress made on the ground since the end of July and the marked reduction in the number of ceasefire violations. They nevertheless regret that the implementation of demining measures and the opening of new checkpoints, which are of such importance for the populations, is still blocked in the TCG on account of the intransigence of the *de facto* authorities, with Russia's support.

We renew our appeal to Russia and Ukraine to make progress in implementing the Minsk agreements so as to arrive at the establishment of a just and lasting peace and the re-establishment of full

Ukrainian sovereignty over Donbas. In that regard, you can be sure that the commitment of France and Germany within the Normandy format will remain strong and unwavering.