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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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AT THE 1229th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 May 2019

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

Mr. Chairperson,

Power has changed hands in Ukraine. The new President Volodymyr Zelensky assumed office on 20 May. His election victory clearly demonstrated the attitude of the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians towards the ill-fated policy of the outgoing Petro Poroshenko – a policy based on rabid Russophobia, support for radical nationalism and the suppression of dissent. The international community is convinced that people in Ukraine want peace, not war.

Having become President, Volodymyr Zelensky has assumed responsibility for governing a country with a huge burden of problems inherited from the previous leaders, first and foremost the military operation against the people in Donbas and the failure to resolve the internal Ukrainian crisis.

Despite the absence in Mr. Zelensky's inaugural speech of any reference to the Minsk agreements and the need for their rapid implementation, we assume that the elected President of Ukraine and his team are aware of the significance of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015 endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202 of 17 February 2015 and supported in the statement by the President of the Security Council of 6 June 2018. That document is the only internationally recognized framework for a settlement of crisis in Ukraine. It is a road map laying out a clear set of reciprocal commitments by the parties – the Ukrainian Government and the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk – in the politico-military, socio-economic and humanitarian spheres.

It should not be forgotten that the aforementioned document was developed within the Normandy format. Subsequently, the leaders of the Normandy Quartet – France, Germany, Ukraine and Russia – outlined at the summits in Paris (2015) and Berlin (2016) the priorities as regards political and security issues and agreed on the need to synchronize their resolution within the framework of the Minsk Package of Measures. The fact that it is the only framework for a peaceful resolution was also confirmed in a telephone conversation by the leaders of Russia, France and Germany two days ago, on 21 May.

We have all witnessed how for more than four years the former leadership of Ukraine did all it could to avoid fulfilling its commitments under the Minsk Package of Measures. The Ukrainian Government's negotiators merely pretended to engage in this process. Because of this, not a single point of the Minsk

Package of Measures has been fully implemented to date. The dialogue in the working groups has clearly come to a standstill owing to the lack of political will for a settlement on the part of the Ukrainian Government. Shelling has continued in Donbas, bringing death, destruction and suffering to civilians. In an attempt to distract the international community's attention from these inhumane acts, the representatives of Ukraine exaggerated the myth of "Russian aggression", which does not exist. However, this myth can be exploited to maintain the image of a "victim", making it easier to ask for support, including military and financial support. We hope that the community of OSCE participating States understands where the funds allocated by the governments of certain countries go.

Mr. Chairperson,

The negotiation process in the Minsk-based Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) should not be suspended. The pause that occurred there today was provoked by the departure of the former President's team and the termination of the powers of key Ukrainian negotiators. We regret that the TCG meeting scheduled for 22 May did not take place as a result. It has been rescheduled for 5 June. Thus, the work of the only platform for direct contacts between the parties to the internal Ukrainian crisis has been disrupted for more than a month. We trust that the Ukrainian Government will appoint new representatives in the negotiation process without delay. Capable people are needed who will take a responsible approach to achieving practical results.

In his inaugural address outlining his programme, the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, indicated that his main priority for Donbas was a ceasefire. He declared that he was ready for dialogue and the adoption of difficult decisions. The coming weeks and months will be a test of his words in action. We expect that in line with the stated goals of establishing a "silence regime" concrete practical steps will follow.

At the same time, it is important that the Ukrainian Government does not repeat one of the main mistakes of the previous authorities, namely selective interpretation of the Minsk Package of Measures. The ceasefire is its first point and an extremely important one, but not the only one. We must not forget either about such things as the need for direct dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk, permanent legislation on the special status of Donbas, agreement of modalities for the holding of local elections, ensuring amnesty for the participants in the events in Donbas and an exchange of detained persons, based on the principle "all for all", and restoration of socio-economic ties. None of this has been done in full measure so far. I would emphasize that only the co-ordinated fulfilment of all the provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures will enable us to achieve lasting peace based on a comprehensive political settlement.

According to Mr. Zelensky, in the past five years, the Ukrainian authorities did nothing to make the people of Donbas feel like inhabitants of a unified country. Indeed, the Maidan authorities have systematically marginalized Donbas within the shared socio-economic and cultural space and tightened the embargo on the region. Furthermore, during all this time we saw in Donetsk and Luhansk how Petro Poroshenko's team conducted dangerous experiments to reformat the identity and redefine the historical memory of the people of Ukraine, aggressively interfered in religious life, and promoted Russophobic and anti-Ukrainian initiatives, completely disregarding popular opinion. The actions of the authorities in Kyiv did nothing to help overcome the existing tensions and instead merely intensified them.

Mr. Chairperson,

Given the current massive domestic political changes in Ukraine, the role and responsibility of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) are increasing – with regard to monitoring the parties' commitment to the ceasefire regime in Donbas, and also monitoring and supporting respect for

human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. Everything possible should be done so that hotheads cannot take advantage of the current situation with a view to escalating tension.

It is also important to ensure the safety of the Mission monitors, who continue to work in difficult conditions, to protect them from provocative incidents like the one that occurred on 15 May, when forces opened fire near an SMM patrol in territory controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces near the Donetsk filtration station.

Mr. Chairperson,

The process for resolving the crisis in Ukraine needs fresh impetus. We trust that the new Ukrainian leadership will carefully analyse the mistakes made by the previous authorities that prevented a settlement, and will adhere strictly and closely to the letter and spirit of the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015. With a view to fostering its implementation as soon as possible, we urge our partners to use the influence they have on the new authorities in Kyiv to fulfil their commitments in good faith. For our part, we are ready to do our utmost to promote direct dialogue between the parties to the internal Ukrainian conflict in the interests of achieving peace in our fraternal neighbouring country as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your attention.