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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1119th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 November 2016

**In response to the report by the Chief Observer of the
OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and
Donetsk, Mr. Flavien Schaller**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Schaller,

We are pleased to welcome you to this meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council and thank you for your detailed report.

We note the objectiveness of the fact-based weekly reports by the Mission headed by you. The observers work strictly within the bounds of their mandate and, I would remind you, are present at the Gukovo and Donetsk checkpoints as a gesture of goodwill by Russia in furtherance of the Berlin Declaration of 2 July 2014. We do not have any obligations to deploy observers along the entire length of the border.

The Mission reports that the situation is quiet, with no movement of arms or military hardware and a regular cross-border flow of civilians. The accusations levelled against Russia are contrived and unfounded and are typical of the use by the United States of America and Ukraine of an external factor to cover up their own inability to resolve the conflict within Ukraine. We visited the checkpoints in August and saw the so-called “people in camouflage” with our own eyes. These people have nothing to do with the Russian armed forces whose presence in Donbas the US and Ukrainian representatives constantly harp on about. We urge our colleagues to act on the facts presented in the Observer Mission’s report and not to make up stories.

For the most part, the checkpoints are used by people from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions who are forced because of the humanitarian blockade of Donbas imposed by the Ukrainian Government to travel regularly to the Rostov region to tend to their everyday needs – obtaining food and medicine and using cash dispensers. The Ukrainian authorities criticize the humanitarian convoys sent by Russia, evidently believing that the people of Donbas should starve. The Mission also notes the crossing of the border by families with large

amounts of luggage. These are Ukrainian refugees returning home as part of a recently emerging trend.

The Russian Federation is taking the necessary measures to provide the OSCE observers at the Russian checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk with safe and comfortable working conditions. Meetings to discuss the Mission's work take place at the representation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Rostov region and measures have been taken to improve co-operation between the OSCE observers and the Russian Ministry for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Disaster Relief. The Mission is regularly given advance notice of arriving Russian humanitarian convoys. The observers note that the Ukrainian customs officers and border officials stationed as a gesture of goodwill on the Russian side of the Donetsk checkpoint regularly inspect with their Russian colleagues humanitarian convoys before they enter Ukraine and on their return.

Work is continuing on privileges and immunities for the observers. In view of the OSCE's lack of an international legal personality, this question is being handled by accrediting the Mission members with their embassies in Russia. The modalities were explained additionally to diplomats and military attachés of States seconding observers at a meeting in Moscow on 14 November with representatives of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Minsk Package of Measures provides a clear schedule proposing the "reinstatement of full control of the State border by the Government of Ukraine throughout the conflict area, starting on day 1 after the local elections and ending after the comprehensive political settlement (local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions on the basis of the Law of Ukraine and constitutional reform)". We urge colleagues to focus on helping to complete the priority tasks set forth in the Package of Measures and not to dream up interpretations that could undermine the settlement being carried out at the political level.

In conclusion, I should like once again to thank Mr. Schaller for his work and assure him of our willingness to help the Observer Mission to fulfil its mandate.

Thank you for your attention.