

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY RUDENKO,
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RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1047th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The peace process in Ukraine is currently in an extremely critical phase, requiring clear and careful steps from all the parties involved to implement the entire Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements fully and consistently. We regard the readiness to comply strictly with the spirit and the letter of these agreements as a test of the commitment to a peaceful resolution of the internal Ukrainian crisis.

The understanding that there is no alternative to the Minsk Package of Measures was reaffirmed at the latest meeting of the ministers for foreign affairs of the Normandy format countries in Berlin on 13 April. There is no disagreement on this basic issue, and this is a positive aspect.

At the same time, we are compelled to note that we have serious doubts regarding Kyiv's willingness to implement in good faith the Package of Measures in practice. Furthermore, recent specific actions by the Ukrainian authorities demonstrate a patent desire to modify or drag out the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Following the initial promising steps towards a ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy equipment, there has once again been a sharp increase in the intensity of armed clashes in "hotspots" in the security zone, particularly near Donetsk airport and Shyrokyne. On 12 April alone OSCE monitors recorded 1,166 shell explosions in Donetsk. One has the impression that the Ukrainian security forces are attempting to use heavy weapons to break through the demarcation line and create a bridgehead for a subsequent attack on Donetsk. There is dangerous massing of Ukrainian forces, including heavy weapons, around Donetsk, near Volnovakha and to the west of Luhansk.

Kyiv itself is in no hurry to provide information on the inventory of heavy weapons and their storage sites, which our colleagues are demanding from Donetsk and Luhansk. According to statistics from the Special Monitoring Mission's (SMM) reports, during the past

week (from 2 to 10 April) restrictions on the monitors' freedom of movement by government forces were double those on the part of the insurgents (28 and 12 respectively).

These alarming trends need to be reversed immediately. In Berlin the Normandy quartet ministers urged the parties to make efforts to comply with the ceasefire and complete the withdrawal of all heavy equipment, and also to agree within the Contact Group in consultation with the SMM and the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC) on a schedule for the withdrawal of weapons with a calibre of up to 100 mm and all types of tanks which remain outside the framework of the Minsk agreements. This will make it possible to achieve a significant de-escalation and reduce provocations to a minimum, also making it easier for the SMM to verify the absence of weapons in the security zone. We also support the plan proposed by the SMM and the JCCC on removing the parties' forces to a distance of five to eight kilometres in the vicinity of Shyrokyne and other "hotspots" on the line of contact.

JCCC data, to which reference is made in the SMM reports of 11 and 12 April, shows that Right Sector volunteer battalions are once again instigating armed clashes, in particular near Shyrokyne and Donetsk airport. It seems that Kyiv's avowed measures to bring the irregular armed formations under the command of the central authorities have proven ineffective.

It is crucial that not only the military component of the Minsk agreements be implemented, but also the political, economic and humanitarian components. It is essential to finally establish the working groups on the main settlement issues, which were provided for in point 13 of the Package of Measures. We welcome the efforts of the Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, Heidi Tagliavini, in this regard. I might recall that Russia and the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk had already sent Ms. Tagliavini their lists of experts last week. Yesterday, as far as we are aware, the Ukrainian authorities also submitted their nominees. We hope that this will enable work to begin soon in the subgroups.

The political, socio-economic and humanitarian reintegration of Donetsk and Luhansk into the Ukrainian State will be impossible without direct dialogue, including on the parameters of constitutional reform identified in Minsk. If Kyiv continues to avoid such a dialogue and to blindly take unilateral steps, tension will only grow and the split in Ukraine deepen. Unfortunately, in an interview on Channel 5 the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Pavlo Klimkin, said that Ukraine had no intention of sustaining a direct dialogue with the current representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. In so doing, Ukraine has once again confirmed its overtly unconstructive position, which contravenes the provisions of the Package of Measures agreed upon in Minsk on 12 February.

The implementation of points 4 and 12 of the Package of Measures is being blatantly sabotaged. In Minsk it was said that the Verkhovna Rada would specify the territory to be covered by the law adopted earlier on interim local self-government in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. However, the entry into force of that law has fallen afoul of contrived additional conditions. The key provision regarding the agreement of modalities for the organization and holding of elections in Donbas with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk has not been implemented.

There has been no progress in establishing a mechanism for the participation of Donbas representatives in the work on constitutional reform, which provides for “decentralization taking into account the characteristics of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, agreed upon with the representatives of these regions” as key element. Likewise, no place has so far been found for the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk in the Constitutional Commission set up by Petro Poroshenko. Attempts to squeeze some VIPs from Donbas into this Commission are downright irreverent.

Unfortunately, the authorities in Kyiv have still not got around to restoring the banking system, including for the payment of pensions and benefits. There was straightforward agreement on this in Minsk. The movement of citizens in the conflict zone and the delivery of food, medicines and humanitarian aid to the region are obstructed. The economic strangulation of the region is only growing worse. Humanitarian organizations of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross have been forced to admit this.

The exchange of prisoners is painfully slow. Even those who have been released by Kyiv have no guarantee that they will not be prosecuted in the future. We expect Kyiv to take measures to ensure that the amnesty law enters into force, prohibiting the prosecution and punishment of these persons, as stipulated in point 5 of the Package of Measures.

Mr. Chairperson,

We call on all interested OSCE participating States, the Chairmanship, the Troika countries and the Organization’s institutions to help the officials in Kyiv to overcome their political deafness – the unwillingness to listen to and talk with a significant proportion of the country’s citizens. Imposing unilateral approaches, particularly by force, does not do anyone any good.

A year ago Oleksandr Turchynov unleashed a punitive operation against the inhabitants of the eastern regions of Ukraine using the armed forces and irregular formations, many of which include outspoken extremists of a Nazi persuasion. According to official estimates alone, which are by no means complete, more than 6,100 people have been killed during the so-called anti-terrorist operation, and almost 15,500 wounded. During this period, almost 1 million people left the country and have remained in Russia. More than half of them have applied for official refugee status, temporary asylum or temporary residence permits. A great number of residential infrastructure facilities have been destroyed by the bombing involving air power, tubed and tubeless artillery and tanks. The affected areas are now under a blockade and cut off from welfare payments and access to food.

Unfortunately, the current criminal legislation does not allow our Ukrainian colleague to explain everything that is happening in Ukraine now as anything other than consequences of “Russian aggression”. For example, now there is a widespread campaign there against so-called “domestic separatism”. Any Ukrainian citizen who criticizes the current authorities, takes a stand against the military draft or is sympathetic towards with Russia falls under this definition. The leaflets being circulated in Ukraine make particular reference to this. Citizens are publically urged to denounce all the dissenters and malcontents to the Ukrainian Security Service. These “separatists” are threatened with lengthy prison sentences. Besides ratcheting up anti-Russian hysteria, all this offers plenty of scope for a “witch-hunt”, political repression and intensified campaigns to intimidate and harass the authorities’ political opponents.

The wave of mysterious suicides in Ukraine is alarming – in particular, the suicides of the former member of parliament Mykhailo Chechetov and the ex-chairman of the Zaporizhzhya Regional State Administration Oleksandr Peklushenko. The circumstances and frequency of these suicides make one think.

Yesterday, things went as far as barefaced murder – Oleh Kalashnikov, a former member of the Verkhovna Rada from the Party of the Regions, was murdered in Kyiv. It is known from Ukrainian sources that Mr. Kalashnikov had recently been threatened with physical violence because of his political views, in particular his call for the 70th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War to be widely celebrated.

At the same time, the Ukrainian authorities are openly hampering the investigation of recent crimes, beginning with the shooting on the Maidan. Council of Europe experts were unable to find that the investigation into these events complied with international standards.

The adoption by the Verkhovna Rada of the latest package of laws on “decommunization” will have even more tragic consequences for Ukrainian society. These laws are aimed at rewriting history and suppressing political dissent. Nazi collaborators and those who fought to liberate the country from fascism are being put in the same bracket in present-day Ukraine. New national heroes are made out of SS collaborationists in the form of criminals from the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. The legal basis has been established for vandalism at the State level. The latest wave of the destruction of monuments has taken place.

The glorification of Nazi collaborators at the official level removes all doubts regarding the true nature of those radical forces that seized power in Ukraine in February of last year.

Attempts to distort the country’s past and renounce its achievements in history will lead to an even greater split in Ukrainian society and undermine confidence, including in the south-east, in Kyiv’s declarations regarding its desire to strengthen the unity of the country. Such steps undermine the Minsk process and jeopardize the prospects for the successful development of Ukrainian statehood.

In conclusion, we should like to draw attention to the campaign of attacks on SMM monitors again unfolding in Ukraine. Deliberately slanderous rumours making the monitors out to be foreign spies are being spread. Articles in the media not only cast aspersions on the authority of the SMM but also threaten the security of the monitors. Unfortunately, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Pavlo Klimkin, is also involved in this campaign, having said in the aforementioned interview that the monitors may pass on some kind of intelligence regarding Ukrainian security force positions to the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. Such statements are inadmissible. We are once again forced to remind Ukraine that in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding with the OSCE it bears full responsibility for the security and safety of the monitors.

Thank you for your attention.