

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/623/20
4 June 2020

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1270th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

4 June 2020

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation in eastern Ukraine remains extremely worrying. Having brought the negotiation process for a settlement to a standstill, the Ukrainian Government continues to move heavy weapons, tanks and military equipment into areas in the immediate vicinity of the line of contact in Donbas. This is evident from the daily updates published by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) on the basis of its monitoring of the railway hubs that the Ukrainian armed forces are using to supply the so-called Joint Forces Operation. The fact that the Ukrainian armed forces are bringing into Donbas not just individual items but virtually the entire range of weapons required to conduct and provide cover for active warfare, including offensive operations, is also alarming.

Over the past one and a half weeks alone, the SMM has reported more than 60 heavy artillery guns (including large-calibre 2S7 Pion 203 mm howitzers and D-20 152 mm howitzers), approximately 50 missile systems, 30 tanks, over 50 armoured combat vehicles, modern electronic warfare systems, minelayers, ambulances and dozens of military trucks at the Khlibodarivka, Pokrovsk and Zachativka railway stations in the Donetsk region.

Against this background, further attempts have been made to “erode” the Minsk agreements. We have already warned on numerous occasions that the Ukrainian Government’s destructive policy is leading the negotiation process nowhere. As can be seen from the work of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) in Minsk, Ukraine’s much-touted beefing up of its representation in this negotiation platform has shown itself to be nothing more than a propaganda move, which has not actually led to any progress. A month has passed since these new measures were introduced, and it is evident that this questionable move by the Ukrainian Government has consisted of appointing to the TCG people who are either not authorized to reach agreements on anything, or appear unable to understand the existing agreements, or simply refuse to follow the letter of the Minsk agreements at all.

Virtually zero progress has been made on all tracks of the settlement process. Even the discussion on the exchange of detainees, the only area where some progress was made after the Normandy Four summit in Paris on 9 December 2019, has ground to a halt. Let me give you a specific example. At the end of last year,

the authorized representative of Ukraine in the TCG, Leonid Kuchma, confirmed in writing Ukraine's commitment to "legal clearance", that is the dismissal of criminal proceedings against persons to be exchanged. However, Halyna Tretiakova, the Ukrainian member of parliament recently appointed to the TCG Humanitarian Working Group, demanded at the very first meeting she attended that the subject of the detainee exchange be removed from the agenda, referring to her insufficient preparation, and at the second meeting questioned whether there was any need at all for the aforementioned "legal clearance".

On 2 June, a Ukrainian delegation led by the Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, Andriy Yermak, visited Berlin. After the visit, the Ukrainian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dmytro Kuleba, said that during the talks with their German counterparts the Ukrainian Government "confirmed [its] key positions on the inadmissibility of direct dialogue with representatives of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic." This dramatic departure from the Ukrainian position set out at the TCG talks little more than a month ago is extremely alarming. It jeopardizes the implementation of the Minsk agreements as such, because direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government and the representatives of certain areas of Donbas is the basis for progress in their implementation.

Ukrainian diplomats are now trying to convince the international community that the Ukrainian Government has consistently refused to recognize the current representatives of the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk as the spokespersons for Donbas. But that is not the case. There are facts and documents that prove otherwise. In the minutes of the TCG meeting on 11 March 2020, Mr. Yermak confirmed in writing his acceptance of Natalya Nikonorova and Vladislav Deinego as the authorized representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In fact, they have already been participating in the TCG for many years. These minutes, which by the way have not been disavowed, also set out the modalities for direct dialogue between the Ukrainian Government and the representatives of the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk on the political and legal aspects of the settlement within the framework of the Advisory Board. Even earlier, in the development of the Package of Measures, the Ukrainian Government co-ordinated with the representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and put down in writing a number of commitments in the field of security, which, as the SMM monitoring data shows, are not being fulfilled properly. All of the aforementioned documents, like the Package of Measures itself, were signed by the representatives of the Ukrainian Government and of the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk.

However, today there are calls from representatives of the Ukrainian authorities for some kind of "reformatting" of the composition of the TCG and the exclusion of those with whom the Ukrainian Government's negotiators used to sit around the negotiation table and with whom it agreed upon and signed commitments. Need I remind you that Ukraine's chief representative in the TCG, Oleksiy Reznikov, has on numerous occasions publicly called for the Package of Measures, which was endorsed by the United Nations Security Council and approved by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202, to be rewritten. And all of this is happening to the accompaniment of empty rhetoric regarding the supposedly responsible approach of the Ukrainian authorities to honouring their commitments under the Minsk agreements.

We are very concerned about the tensions surrounding the SMM's work. Its staff continue to work courageously in very difficult conditions. On 2 June, an SMM camera system in Petrivske was damaged by small arms fire. On 29 May, an explosion was heard 100 metres away from an SMM patrol that was passing through the militia checkpoint in Molodizhne, and the monitors felt the shock wave. The militia members nearby were also forced to take cover. Regrettably, the Mission was unable to publish any information about the nature of that incident, which an expert analysis described as a mortar attack from Ukrainian military positions.

Under these conditions, there is growing concern that the SMM could lose any desire and ability to conduct an objective analysis, which could significantly undermine the results of its operations. The SMM

must act in accordance with its mandate to establish, specify and make public the facts and specific circumstances of incidents. In addition to this, the challenges of the COVID-19 epidemic have highlighted the inadequacy of the SMM's structural resources for maintaining the required standards of field monitoring. These shortcomings allow the opponents of conflict settlement in eastern Ukraine not only to move confidently towards dismantling the Minsk process, but even to speculate about the expediency of preserving the Mission in its present form and about switching to other instruments. The implementation of such plans would not only rapidly frustrate the settlement efforts but also do irreparable damage to the OSCE's credibility. We strongly recommend looking at the developments from this angle when analysing the threats to SMM operations. We hope that the Mission will be able to overcome these difficulties.

We recall once again that the continuing crisis in Ukraine is the result of the February 2014 coup d'état, which was inspired, funded and organized from abroad and has led to the armed confrontation in Donbas and the suffering of millions of civilians in Ukraine on a massive scale. The system of external management, which the Government of the United States of America imposed on the Ukrainian people after that, has not produced an economic miracle, while at the same time the Ukrainian authorities continue to pursue a discriminatory policy that is deepening the dividing lines in society amidst a growing number of corruption scandals.

We often hear that the claims about the external management of Ukraine are nothing but propaganda narratives. However, one only has to listen to comments made by Ukrainian officials to realize that is not the case. For example, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Yehor Bozhok, confirmed in a recent interview that Ukraine's military-industrial complex and the work of the Ukrainian law enforcement authorities, including the intelligence services, are under close supervision by the country's foreign mentors, primarily the United States, who are effectively managing their entire reorganization process.

Meanwhile, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and a number of European Union countries continue to train and supply arms to the Ukrainian army and incite it to engage in further violence in Donbas. Weapon deliveries continue even despite the coronavirus epidemic. On 15 May, the US embassy in Ukraine reported that more than 25 million US dollars' worth of military equipment intended for the Ukrainian armed forces had been received. This year, the US Government plans to release some 250 million US dollars in military aid to Ukraine. Since 2014, the United States has provided over 1.6 billion US dollars in military aid to the Ukrainian leadership, amidst weekly reports of the casualties of Ukrainian shelling in Donbas. Destructive lethal weapons have also been delivered. All this only encourages the bellicose sentiments of the hotheads in Kyiv who are advocating a military solution in Donbas.

The internal Ukrainian conflict has dragged on for many years, and people are sick and tired of the war. If the Ukrainian authorities really want to achieve peace in Donbas, they should immediately stop the shelling, first and foremost of residential buildings and social facilities, take practical steps to prove their commitment to a full ceasefire regime and agree on measures without delay in the TCG in support of it, disengage forces and hardware, lift the socio-economic blockade of the region and start, at long last, the process of a comprehensive political settlement on the basis of direct and results-oriented dialogue with the representatives of the authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk in the TCG in Minsk in accordance with the provisions of the Package of Measures and the agreements reached in the "Normandy format". We call on the OSCE to facilitate these processes as much as possible.

Thank you for your attention.