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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1078th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 November 2015

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We share the concern at the marked exacerbation of the situation in Donbas. The level of ceasefire violations takes us back to the period prior to the truce declared at the start of the new school year. The Ukrainian armed forces are using Grad missile systems, mortars of various calibres and other types of weaponry. What is most dangerous is the fact that the shelling of residential areas, including schools, has resumed. For example, 15 mortar shells exploded in the grounds of school No. 15 in Zaitseve on 16 November. The shelling increasingly occurs during the daytime, when the streets of Donetsk, Horlivka and other towns in Donbas are full of people.

Whereas in early November the Ukrainian security forces were provoking the militias with single strikes against populated areas using Grad missiles (as happened on 3 November in Staromykhailivka), now the shelling is on a massive scale. On 13 November, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) confirmed the shelling of a school in Zaitseve using a Kopye grenade launcher from a north-westerly direction and a 120 mm mortar from a northerly direction, in other words from positions held by the Ukrainian armed forces. Recently the residents of Staromykhailivka (Donetsk People's Republic) have again been complaining to the monitors about intensified shelling. In their investigation of this area, the SMM noted the destruction of virtually all houses near the line of contact. On 15 November, the monitors recorded 229 shell explosions in the vicinity of Donetsk railway station.

These are not the only ceasefire violations by the Ukrainian armed forces. The SMM needs to verify the information being circulated, including photo and video material, on the multiple shelling by Ukrainian forces of populated areas in Donbas.

At the Trilateral Contact Group meeting in Minsk on 17 November, on the basis of the latest SMM statistics, the senior representative of Ukraine was informed that in fact the Ukrainian side was basically responsible for the increased shelling, the movement of military equipment into the security zone, the jamming of SMM drones and other violations.

At a time when the measures to stabilize the situation in the conflict zone are very shaky, it is extremely dangerous to pursue measures like the proposed rotation of units of the Ukrainian armed forces on the line of contact, which, it appears, includes plans to deploy new military equipment, which will inevitably lead to increased tension in this zone.

Kyiv has once again come out with the same old story that the militias are shelling themselves, while the Ukrainian units are allegedly adhering strictly to the Package of Measures. This does not reflect the real state of affairs. Statistics provided by the SMM show that the Ukrainian security forces are violating the truce on a more frequent basis.

The assertions by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Ukraine that “thousands of people wearing military camouflage fatigues” are moving into Ukraine through the Gukovo and Donetsk checkpoints also do not reflect the real state of affairs. We have checked this against the Mission reports. They mention people in “camouflage fatigues” (incidentally, this is currently a very popular form of clothing), who are mainly travelling to Russia and not Ukraine, and not thousands but 100 to 150 people per week.

Much attention is now being paid to the problem of mines. We are grateful to the SMM and the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination for their efforts to facilitate dialogue on the ground to ensure that demining is part of the reconstruction work. It is a matter of urgency to verify that what is happening in Shyrokyne, which must not only be demined but also demilitarized. There are reports of this village being used by Ukrainian security forces to shell militia-controlled villages.

It is not for nothing that we have urged the SMM to pay due attention to the movement of Ukrainian armed forces’ equipment not only in the security zone but also at the rear. Reports on the movement of troops and weapons to Donbas from other parts of Ukraine need to be verified carefully.

Many in Kyiv and beyond the borders of Ukraine clearly do not like the option of full implementation of the Package of Measures, especially the commitment voluntarily undertaken by Kyiv to reach agreement with the militias on all elements of constitutional reform concerning Donbas. However, this is a key prerequisite not only for returning control of the State border to Ukraine, something which Ukrainian and Western representatives have debated here so energetically, but also for a settlement as a whole. Attempts to modify the provisions of the Minsk document or to revoke this agreement completely by provoking tension in Donbas are extremely dangerous. We urge Kyiv to refrain from yet another venture, which will only result in fresh victims and destruction.

We hope that the recent meetings in Minsk of the Contact Group and its subgroups will help to put the situation back on track towards de-escalation. We fully support the call for an immediate end to all action incompatible with the agreements reached and efforts towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict within the framework of the Minsk process.

We urge all those interested in stabilizing the situation in Ukraine to exert the necessary influence on the authorities in Kyiv so that the truce that has been achieved through great effort can be restored and the political process can develop further.

We should like once again to express our support for the Contact Group and its specialist subgroups. We trust that the negotiations on the drafting of a special law on local elections in Donbas will acquire the necessary momentum. It is clear – and this is evident even from the recent report by the observation mission sent by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights – that the current Ukrainian electoral legislation is not the best basis for holding elections in accordance with the relevant OSCE standards, as stipulated in the Package of Measures. It needs to be improved and a framework for holding elections agreed upon with Donetsk and Luhansk and formalized in law.

Prior to the start of the electoral process in Donbas, it is necessary to enact the amnesty law, which according to the Package of Measures would prohibit the prosecution and punishment of persons in connection with the events that took place in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

In conclusion, I should like to repeat that there is no alternative to implementing the Package of Measures. Our common task is to make substantive progress in implementing all aspects of that document in the prescribed order. Russia will do all it can to assist in this. We expect a similar approach from the Western representatives. It is important to systematically strengthen confidence between the parties and help them to reach compromises and arrive at concrete results in the near future.

Putting a stop to the so-called anti-terrorist operation, which has nothing to do with combating terrorism, and lifting the blockade of Donbas, which is inhumane in its essence and “separatist” in its consequences, would help to create such an atmosphere.

Thank you for your attention.