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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1163rd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

9 November 2017

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The security situation in Donbas is deteriorating. Once again, this is happening on the eve of important international events.

Last weekend, monitors from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) recorded a sharp escalation of tension and widespread shelling of Donetsk and its environs from directions where Ukrainian armed forces are stationed. Exchanges of fire intensified on 3 November, after the SMM camera at the Donetsk filtration station recorded shots from north-west to south-east, in other words from Ukrainian armed forces' positions. According to the monitors, as a result of the massive shelling on 5 November in the Kyivskyi district of Donetsk, two civilians were injured and seven houses damaged, along with Donetsk Technical College, a bus stop, a shop, an electric power line and a gas pipeline. On 5 November, a shell from a Grad multiple-launch rocket system fired from the direction where Ukrainian armed forces are stationed hit the Verkhniokalmiuska filtration station, damaging its chlorine storage tank, and a chlorine pipeline at the Donetsk filtration station was also damaged. According to the SMM, the shells landed just 70 metres away from the chlorine storage site.

Once again, the Ukrainian security forces have put the region at risk of a large-scale humanitarian disaster.

The indiscriminate use by the Ukrainian security forces of artillery prohibited under the Minsk Package of Measures occurs on a weekly basis. Between 30 October and 3 November, according to the SMM, as a result of shelling from the directions where Ukrainian armed forces are stationed, a civilian was injured in Trudivski (3 November), two houses were damaged in Leninske (31 October), along with an apartment building and a hospital in Staromykhailivka (29 October) and a house in Pryshyb (30 October), and the outskirts of Slovianoserbsk were hit by an artillery strike (31 October).

The escalation of tension in Donbas is no accident. The Ukrainian armed forces prepared this ahead of time. A week earlier (30 October to 5 November), the SMM had reported a concentration in Rubizhne of Ukrainian armed forces' weapons prohibited by the Minsk agreements (39 artillery systems and 15 tanks) and in Zachativka (26 howitzers, 31 tanks, 12 surface-to-air missile systems and 2 anti-tank guns). Closer to the line of contact, the monitors counted a further 72 units of military equipment (11 howitzers and 6 anti-tank guns in Kostiantynivka, 18 howitzers in Artemivsk, 10 tanks in Teple, 8 self-propelled artillery systems in Oleksandropil, 6 howitzers in Kurakhove, 3 multiple-launch rocket systems in Poltavka, 4 howitzers in Lysychansk, 2 howitzers in Novoaidar, 1 artillery gun in Volnovakha, 1 howitzer in Aslanove and 1 howitzer in Smolianynove). The Ukrainian armed forces conducted live-fire exercises in Artemivsk on 3 November and used unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to gather intelligence in violation of paragraph 7 of the Minsk Memorandum. The latest launch of a UAV by the Ukrainian security forces was reported by the SMM near Pyschevyk on 4 November.

We call on the SMM to pay greater attention to the rear of the Ukrainian armed forces, where forces can be assembled and massed and ammunition transferred to the line of contact.

The areas controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces on the outskirts of Stanytsia Luhanska, Zolote and Shchastia remain off limits to the SMM. The number of incidents recorded by the SMM on a weekly basis involving monitors being unable to enter territory controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces as a result of the danger posed by mines exceeds all the limitations placed on them in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions for the same periods.

Not only the shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces but also the excesses by the Ukrainian military and volunteers at the line of contact is cause for extreme concern. The SMM has reported on two cases of looting. On 3 November, monitors witnessed the brutal detention of a civilian at the Stanytsia Luhanska checkpoint. The Ukrainian border guards pointed a sub-machine gun at him, yelled at him and took him into custody. This was not an isolated incident. According to information in the media, the Ukrainian security forces stop civilians at the line of contact and unlawfully detain them, demanding a ransom from their relatives, or they identify the elderly parents of militia commanders and hold them hostage. We call on the SMM and the relevant OSCE institutions to pay the closest attention to this information and seriously monitor the situation as regards Donbas civilians crossing the line of contact.

The tension at the line of contact is a traditional gauge of the aggravation of the political and socio-economic situation in government-controlled territory.

The SMM reports – and we urge it to continue doing so in greater detail – on the regular demonstrations of thousands of people against budget cuts, with demands for reform and combating corruption. The establishment of an anti-corruption court so far remains nothing more than an aim in the fine-looking booklets of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian Government continues to restrict the right to use the Russian language, which is spoken by a significant proportion of the country's population. This refers not only to the discriminatory law on education, but also to the language quota on radio and television,

restrictions on guest appearances by Russian artists and cultural figures, and the blocking of Russian television channels.

The roots of the anti-Russian hysteria are well known and not all of them are of Ukrainian origin; many were introduced from the outside by Western “well-wishers”. Attempts to sever economic, cultural and family ties between the peoples of Russia and Ukraine will not bring anything good for the Ukrainian Government. As a result of such efforts on the part of the radicals, who are endeavouring to remain in power by ratcheting up anti-Russian hysteria, the cracks in the Ukrainian State will only become deeper.

An amendment to the draft law on the reintegration of Donbas was recently submitted to the Verkhovna Rada, which proposes severing all relations, including diplomatic ones, between Moscow and Kyiv. This demonstrates once more that, for their own purposes, the radical nationalists are ready to strike at the interests of most Ukrainian citizens, including those who travel to work in Russia. Such initiatives do not contribute to a peaceful settlement of the conflict in the east of the country; on the contrary, they pave the way for a military operation.

Once again, we draw attention to the pressure exerted on journalists in Ukraine. We have already mentioned this during the discussion of the report by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. Foreign journalists are not allowed into the country under contrived pretexts. On 7 November, the Ukrainian Security Service removed the RIA Novosti journalist Zahar Vinogradov from the Moscow to Odessa train, interrogated him, expelled him from the country without giving reasons and banned him from entering Ukraine for five years. We link this to the fact that Mr. Vinogradov intended to visit Zhytomyr, where the trial continues against the journalist Vasily Muravitsky, who is accused of State treason for his writings. Earlier, the Ukrainian intelligence services detained the Channel One journalist Anna Kurbatova in Kyiv. Russian journalists are not the only ones encountering repression. On 29 August 2017, the Ukrainian security forces expelled two Spanish journalists, Manuel Angel Sastre and Antonio Pampliega, from the country.

In conclusion, we recall that the settlement of the crisis in eastern Ukraine depends on the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements and the agreement of all the necessary modalities within the framework of direct dialogue between the parties. The political issues and security aspects should be discussed in parallel and without any artificial conditions. Sabotaging the disengagement of forces in the area near Stanytsia Luhanska is an important marker, indicating the willingness or unwillingness of the Ukrainian Government to engage in military de-escalation and reach a political settlement, and to grant the region permanent special status. As long as such willingness is not evident, yet another opportunity for disengaging the forces will be wasted. Such a position on the part of the Ukrainian Government will only lead to a further separation of Donetsk and Luhansk from the rest of Ukraine and effectively result in a freezing rather than a settlement of the conflict.

Thank you for your attention.