

PC.DEL/1383/18
13 November 2018

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1201st (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

12 November 2018

**On the convening of the special meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
on the expression of will by the inhabitants of Donbas**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are surprised at the convening today of a special meeting of the Permanent Council. The topic of elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine has been discussed in this room for the past three weeks. The positions are well known, and the necessary explanations have been provided. Furthermore, each Thursday we have the opportunity to exchange views on the situation in Ukraine and the need to implement the Minsk agreements. Where is the “added value” of today’s meeting?

The elections held on 11 November have nothing to do with the implementation of the Minsk agreements. However, recently quite a number of incidents flagrantly violating the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015 have taken place in Ukraine, but no special meetings of the Permanent Council were convened, or else the convening of such meetings was rejected. On 28 September 2017, the Ukrainian Law on Education entered into force. This law made it impossible to implement Point 11 of the Package of Measures on adopting permanent legislation on the special status of Donbas in accordance with the right to linguistic self-determination. The Law on Reintegration as it is known, ruling out the possibility of an amnesty as provided for in Point 5 of the Package of Measures, entered into force on 24 February 2018.

Despite Russia calling on the OSCE to conduct a comparative analysis of that law and the Minsk agreements, nothing has been done. Over the past two years, the Ukrainian armed forces have occupied new areas along the line of contact, including Shyrokyne, which had been demilitarized, and the disengagement areas in Zolote and Petrivske. On 7 June 2017, they attempted to break through to Zholobok using tanks, and on 17 April 2018 they fired at a bus carrying Donetsk filtration station employees. On 31 August this year, Alexander Zakharchenko, a signatory to the Minsk agreements, was murdered in Donetsk. Where was the OSCE’s response? I repeat that no special meetings of the OSCE Permanent Council were convened in this regard. It was the same with the gross violation of the electoral rights of Russian citizens, who on 18 March this year were unable to vote in the Russian

presidential election at polling stations set up at Russian diplomatic missions in Ukraine. And against this background you have the cynicism to say that the expression of will of the inhabitants of Donbas is “undermining the Minsk agreements”. This is a blatant example of double standards and indulging the lawlessness of the authorities in Kyiv.

Mr. Chairperson,

Today, we have heard accusations in this room that the elections in Donbas allegedly contravene the Minsk agreements. I will attempt to explain why this is not true.

Point 12 of the Package of Measures refers to “local elections”. On 11 November, however, the election took place of representatives of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, who, as provided for in that document, are meant to engage in dialogue with the Ukrainian Government, on local elections among other things. Read Point 12 carefully.

Let me emphasize once more: the elections of 11 November were necessary to fill the power vacuum and ensure continuity in the work of the authorities following the murder of Alexander Zakharchenko. In these conditions and given the danger of a return of a scenario involving the use of force, Donbas had no choice but to take matters into its own hands in order to ensure its own existence, life and commitments to the people who have been abandoned by their country. The elected representatives will receive a mandate to deal with the practical problems of maintaining a normal life in the regions, ensuring the functioning of the local authorities and carrying out the social functions that the Ukrainian Government is refusing to perform.

Now let me turn to the free expression of will. Russia suggested listening to members of the election commissions from Donetsk and Luhansk, but this proposal was blocked. Of course, without hearing from people on the ground, it is easier to read out slogans like “elections at gunpoint” and so on. We will provide you with the facts on the basis of information received from the election commissions, observers and the media. Generally speaking, the elections on 11 November were well-organized, peaceful, without irregularities and with a high voter turnout (80 per cent in the Donetsk People’s Republic and 77 per cent in the Luhansk People’s Republic). The inhabitants of certain areas were able to choose from five candidates in the Donetsk region and four candidates in the Luhansk region. Observers from more than 20 countries, including OSCE participating States (Austria, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Serbia and Turkey) and other countries, monitored the voting process.

We respect the expression of will on the part of the inhabitants of south-eastern Ukraine, which, incidentally, was organized within the framework of the universal and equal suffrage guaranteed to citizens by paragraph 7.3 of the Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE of 1990. We regard the elections of 11 November as an important step aimed at continuing dialogue between the representatives of Donetsk, Luhansk and the Ukrainian Government in the Trilateral Contact Group on implementing the Minsk Package of Measures endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2202.

The inhabitants of Donbas clearly demonstrated that they want peace not war. What the Ukrainian Government wants can be seen from the shelling of suburbs of Horlivka by the

Ukrainian armed forces on the day of the elections. I hope that the countries of Europe understand whom they are supporting. Encouraging the “war party” in Kyiv leads to the Ukrainian army constantly violating the ceasefire regime and hindering the disengagement of forces, and the Ukrainian leadership avoiding direct dialogue with the militia and continuing its inhumane economic and transport blockade of Donbas.

We call on the Ukrainian Government finally to begin substantive discussion in the Trilateral Contact Group on decentralization, local elections, special status and constitutional reform. First and foremost, we believe it important to set out on paper the Steinmeier formula. Only then can we ensure progress in the settlement of the internal Ukrainian conflict, which continues to claim lives.

Thank you for your attention