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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1119th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 November 2016

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We note with concern the deterioration of the internal political situation in Ukraine. Punch-ups in the Verkhovna Rada and protest rallies against the worsening socio-economic position of the population are becoming the hallmark of Ukrainian political life, as are the attempts to put all these problems down to Russia's actions.

It is not enough simply to ensure that law and order is respected in the centre of Kyiv. It is crucial to prevent the attempts to divert attention from the internal political unrest by escalating hostilities in the conflict zone in Donbas. The main thing is to put a stop to the shelling of towns and villages. During the weekend alone, almost 3,000 instances of ceasefire violations were recorded, around 11,000 in the course of just one week, and the number of victims among the civilian population doubled this past week. The security zone continues to be pumped full with weapons and equipment. Military flights have resumed along the line of contact.

Another side to the problem is that the Ukrainian military has a material interest in violating the ceasefire regime. The security forces receive a special additional payment if they are involved in hostilities, i.e., when there is shooting at the line of contact. Why not do the opposite and pay the Ukrainian military units in those areas where the ceasefire regime is observed?

The representative of the United States of America expressed a number of wishes today and at the last meeting as to what Russia should do in his view to resolve the conflict. In turn, we believe that the United States should exert all the considerable influence it has on the Ukrainian Government to ensure an immediate cessation of the shelling of Donbas territory. The forces and hardware belonging to the Ukrainian security forces should be withdrawn to the distances established in accordance with the Minsk agreements. The disengagement of forces in the agreed areas should be completed.

The Ukrainian armed forces are still refusing to withdraw their troops from Stanytsia Luhanska. It is clear who is behind the violations – those who have no interest in de-escalation and the transition to a political settlement. These actions are supported by the Ukrainian Government's position in the Trilateral Contact Group, namely it having withdrawn its consent even to the single agreed next area for the disengagement of forces and hardware.

We welcome the installation of cameras by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) in the disengagement areas in Petrivske, Zolote and Stanytsia Luhanska. We call on the parties to ensure the free access of the monitors to the demilitarized districts and to expedite the demining of the approach roads. We condemn the expulsion by Ukrainian security forces of SMM monitors from their observation post near the disengagement area in Zolote. We recall that similar actions in the past resulted in the seizure of the demilitarized village of Shyrokyne by Ukrainian armed forces' units.

We have carefully studied the special report by the SMM on the shelling of a patrol near the village of Oktiabr (the distinguished Permanent Representative of the United States of America referred to this incident last time). As it turned out, the monitors were eyewitnesses to the latest instance of shelling by the Ukrainian security forces of the crossing point on the line of contact, as a result of which the civilian population could have suffered.

The population in the conflict zone continues to face great difficulties. Huge queues of people, who are forced to stand virtually round the clock in inhumane conditions waiting for permission to cross, are gathering at the Ukrainian checkpoints. On the morning of 10 November, the monitors questioned local residents in Stanytsia Luhanska, who reported that they were seeking refuge from the shooting in a militia bunker. The opening of additional crossing points would certainly be welcomed. The restoration of the wooden bridge near Stanytsia Luhanska is an important and kind gesture, but it will not solve the problem either. The most important thing is for the root cause of the current situation to be eliminated, and this is not the non-existent "hybrid forces", but the humanitarian blockade of the region. We suggest that the SMM leadership should return to the idea of ensuring long-term observation of the crossing points, at least during the day, when the Kyiv authorities open them.

Let us recall: who blew up the bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska? The same people who bombed Donetsk, Luhansk and Sloviansk. The shelling continues. As a result of such actions by the Ukrainian armed forces, between 10 and 14 November, one civilian was killed in Brianka, the district was left without light, and miners working at the local mine were trapped underground. Furthermore, a school was damaged in Oleksandrivka, along with a house in Novooleksandrivka and three houses in Kominternove, and a ferroalloy factory was shelled. The western districts of Donetsk once again came under fire, as did villages along the line of contact in the south of the Donetsk region. We urge the SMM to expedite the preparation of its report on the consequences of the shelling of towns and villages and civilian infrastructure in Donbas – not only in recent months, but since the very beginning of the conflict – since April 2014.

The exchange of prisoners is also being dragged out. The Ukrainian Government does not even want to release those who are ill or injured. Everyone is already well aware of the Ukrainian Government's unwillingness to engage in dialogue within the Working Group on Economic Issues in Minsk.

The negotiations in the Contact Group's specialist working group on the political aspects of a settlement need to be considerably intensified. We recall that a comprehensive political solution involves the enactment of a permanent law on the special status of Donbas and constitutional reform, including the consolidation of the special status. There needs to be an end to the sabotage of the agreement on modalities for local elections and a solution to the amnesty question. One has the feeling that the Ukrainian Government believes that only the supporters of a special status for Donbas need the amnesty. We urge that this deluded assumption be abandoned as soon as possible, especially by those responsible for launching the punitive operation against the population of Donbas, which some groundlessly call an "anti-terrorist" operation.

In conclusion, we once again recall that there is no alternative to the Minsk agreements as the basis for a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Ukraine. It is in the interests of all of us to secure their implementation as soon as possible and not to wait for more appropriate conditions of some kind to emerge in Kyiv. Such conditions may never appear.

Thank you for your attention.