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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1070th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 October 2015

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to express cautious optimism with regard to the progress being made in stabilizing the situation in Ukraine and the conditions outlined at the last meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group on 6 October for implementing the provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures. In that connection, Kyiv's direct dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk remains the key condition, to which there is no alternative, for the successful implementation of those provisions of that document that refer expressly to joint work in reaching agreement on the political aspects of a Ukrainian settlement.

The ceasefire regime along the line of contact in Donbas is becoming increasingly stable. Implementing in full the agreement on the withdrawal from the line of contact of all types of tanks, artillery under 100 mm in calibre and mortars under 120 mm in calibre will help to further strengthen the ceasefire. We welcome the start of the practical implementation of the first stage, the withdrawal of weapons belonging to forces of the Luhansk People's Republic and Ukrainian security forces and the active involvement of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) in verifying the withdrawal of these weapons.

It is essential to guarantee that these and other types of heavy weapons are not present in the security zone if we are to avoid resumed shelling of towns and villages in Donbas. We therefore once again stress that the SMM should focus its efforts on patrolling the security zone.

We note the need for strict observance by the OSCE monitors of an identical approach to both sides. Observance and verification of the withdrawal of weapons and monitoring of storage depots should take place uniformly on both sides of the line of contact and be reflected accordingly in the SMM reports. Unfortunately, in some reports there is a marked difference in the information provided on the same types of violations on the part of Kyiv's security forces and the insurgents.

This also applies in full measure to surveillance equipment, whose use in the field should be agreed on with all parties. The current practice, in which flight routes of unmanned aerial vehicles are discussed in advance and detail with one party, while the other party is merely provided with some general reference points, needs to stop.

Filling the security zone with monitors, including through the establishment of permanent observation posts and forward patrol bases, should also facilitate the speedy implementation of Point 2 of the Package of Measures on the withdrawal of heavy weapons.

We agree with the SMM's assessments that unexploded shells and minefields pose a serious threat to the inhabitants of Donbas. This problem needs to be resolved comprehensively and exclusively by agreement with the parties to the conflict during negotiations in the Contact Group.

The stabilization of the situation on the line of contact enables us to step up work on other points of the Package of Measures. The Normandy format summit meeting in Paris on 2 October made it possible to dispel misunderstanding regarding certain requirements of the Minsk Package of Measures and to reiterate that there is no alternative to it as a basis for a peaceful resolution of the situation in Donbas. That document, which was endorsed by a United Nations Security Council resolution, remains the only viable road map with a clear logic and sequence of interrelated steps to resolve the internal conflict in Ukraine.

The main efforts now need to be focused on implementing the political aspects of the Package of Measures, which Kyiv has been blatantly frustrating under various pretexts. The law on the special status of Donbas is not being applied, and there is still no amnesty law. Amendments to the Constitution, which should focus in particular on decentralization with account taken of the special features of Donbas, have not been agreed upon with the region's representatives.

The Ukrainian authorities are taking the same approach to Point 10 of the Package of Measures. Instead of disarming illegal groups, they have been incorporated into Ukraine's security structures, and now the service of foreign mercenaries in these structures has been legalized. This innovative step has nothing to do with the Minsk agreements.

Now, following the meeting in Paris, we hope to see real action from Kyiv rather than a sham. It is not in the interests of the Ukrainian people or their European partners to drag out this process further. By avoiding direct dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk and failing to reach agreement with them on election modalities, Kyiv has already squandered the chance of holding local elections across the country during a single day of voting in October.

Following the decision by Donetsk and Luhansk to postpone the elections in certain regions, a step that was welcomed by Moscow, Brussels and Washington, Kyiv has an additional chance and time to implement all the necessary political commitments in line with the Minsk Package of Measures.

We should, however, like to recall that the delay in holding the local elections does not mean that Kyiv can drag out the implementation of the Minsk II political agreements indefinitely. Kyiv has no interlocutors for agreeing on election modalities other than those who truly control the situation in certain parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and whose signature is on the Package of Measures.

In that context, we expect Kyiv's representatives in the Contact Group and its specialist subgroups to take a constructive approach to dialogue. Work on a law on the holding of local elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, on agreeing on a permanent law on the special status of Donbas, and on implementing the Minsk provisions regarding amnesty and immunity from prosecution in connection with the events in Donbas will be proof of an approach in good faith.

We believe that positive developments in the humanitarian and economic areas would also give additional impetus to the peace process. There has been progress in the exchange of prisoners, and the delivery of international humanitarian aid has become possible. Dozens of trucks were able to deliver such aid to those in need last week.

However, the inhumane blockade of Donbas continues, and local residents do not have access to clean drinking water, which is a flagrant violation of the norms of international humanitarian law. Restrictions remain on the freedom of movement of citizens.

Nevertheless, the recent meetings on Ukraine lead us to hope that the international efforts over many months to help resolve the domestic political crisis in Ukraine, including those by the OSCE, will not be in vain. The chances of success depend on further action by Kyiv to implement in good faith the commitments signed in the Minsk Package of Measures and its readiness in practice to seek joint solutions to the problems in the east of the country in the interests of preserving the unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention.