

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1074th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 November 2015

**In response to the statements by
Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special
Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, and Ambassador Martin Sajdik, Special
Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the
Trilateral Contact Group**

Mr. Chairperson,
Ambassador Apakan and Ambassador Sajdik,

We are pleased to welcome you to this special meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council and thank you for your detailed reports on ways of helping to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict within Ukraine and the work of the Trilateral Contact Group and its specialist subgroups.

We highly appreciate the work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), particularly its efforts to assist in implementing the Minsk Package of Measures. We agree with Ambassador Apakan that among the SMM's key tasks in the near future are close monitoring of the situation in the security zone, verification of the withdrawal of weapons in accordance with the Minsk Package of Measures and its Addendum, and helping the parties with the demining and demilitarization of Shyrokyne.

The situation, particularly near Donetsk, remains uneasy, and it is still too early to speak of full stabilization. Incidents are still occurring on the line of contact. It is unacceptable that the internal political unrest after the first round of local elections in Ukraine should exert a destabilizing influence on the situation around the line of contact.

The number and intensity of skirmishes around Donetsk airport have increased considerably in the first days of November. In the last two weeks, monitors have noted an influx of radical members of the Right Sector at the line of contact and the appearance in the security zone of no fewer than 30 units of large-calibre Ukrainian artillery, including multiple-launch rocket systems. All this confirms the need for tighter monitoring of the security zone on both sides of the line of contact, the establishment of forward patrol bases there and a round-the-clock SMM presence at hotspots. The mechanism for urgent

consultations within the Trilateral Contact Group, which held a videoconference yesterday, will also play an important role.

We note the SMM's activities to verify the withdrawal of weapons. We repeat the need not only to check the equipment in the storage facilities but also, in the first instance, to make sure, with the aid of technical means such as fixed cameras, that they are absent from the security zone. Drones should be used to cover both sides of the line of contact equally and identically in terms of agreement on their flight paths. It is unacceptable for one side to be given preference.

The SMM regularly reports on military equipment beyond the line of withdrawal specified in the Minsk Package of Measures and Addendum. At the same time, the monitors are keeping a far more intensive watch on the territory controlled by the militia close to the Ukrainian-Russian border, which they visit every other day, and now also in the Luhansk region. This is even evident from the SMM statistics. This is not the right approach. There is a considerable threat of escalation from the concentration of military equipment belonging to the Ukrainian armed forces in neighbouring regions, particularly in the east of the Dnipropetrovsk region. There is a need to extend drone flights to these territories and to increase the number of monitors in the Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv regions so as to permit daily patrols, including verification of Ukrainian armed forces storage sites and units.

The monitors need to pay additional attention to the growth mentioned by the SMM of illicit arms trafficking and the increase in the various forms of protest in the western and central regions of Ukraine. We have carefully studied the SMM report on the situation of national minorities in various parts of Ukraine. Reports devoted to the activity of extremist organizations and the situation with regard to freedom of the media would be even more useful.

We are awaiting a summary report from the SMM on the consequences of the bombardment of towns and villages during the conflict. Greater attention also needs to be paid to the humanitarian situation. We support the Mission's efforts to establish contacts on the ground to resolve practical problems – repair and reconstruction work, the movement of people and transport of humanitarian aid, and demining. It would be useful to organize a permanent monitoring presence at crossing points, in particular in view of the many complaints of extortion and bribes demanded by the Ukrainian military personnel. Given the information from the SMM about the looting of the private sector in Pisky by Ukrainian soldiers, we urge the Mission to keep a close watch on cases of pillaging in Donbas.

We highly appreciate the contribution by the SMM and the Chief Monitor personally to the work of the Minsk Contact Group, in particular the security subgroup co-ordinated by Ambassador Apakan. We are confident that the accumulated experience will provide effective assistance to the parties in dealing with the tasks facing them, particularly the demining and demilitarization of Shyrokyne.

We appreciate the personal contribution of Ambassador Sajdik and the efforts of the co-ordinators of the subgroups to assist the parties in seeking mutually acceptable ways of implementing the Minsk Package of Measures. We are particularly grateful to Belarus for providing a negotiating platform and ensuring favourable conditions for the work of the Contact Group and its specialist subgroups.

Resolution of the whole range of problems concerning the settlement of the situation in Donbas depends explicitly on the willingness of Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk to conduct direct and pragmatic dialogue. We expect the work of all of the subgroups to be aimed at achieving progress in their own fields, regardless of progress in the other subgroups. It is important in our opinion for the negotiations to remain confidential.

Attempts to discredit the Minsk Package of Measures pose a great danger to the settlement process, which must take place exclusively by peaceful political means. Arguments that the document does not have a legal or binding character and that its signatories are individuals without official status are absolutely unacceptable. It is true that the title “second President of Ukraine”, as far as we know, is not an official position with authoritative powers, but this does it mean that the Minsk Package of Measures does not imply commitments for Ukraine, nor does not mean that other signatories – Alexander Zakharchenko and Igor Plotnitsky – did not assume commitments for fulfilling the agreements within their competence.

The Minsk Package of Measures is the result of a difficult compromise. It cannot fully accommodate all parties, particularly those who didn’t sign it but “stood behind others watching over their shoulder”. Nevertheless, it is the sole basis for launching a sustainable process of peaceful settlement and reconstruction in Donbas. There are no alternatives to it. We believe it necessary to make this point clearly and explicitly to all negotiators at all times.

The leaders of certain areas of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions have no easy task in persuading the population of the need to come halfway towards meeting the Ukrainian authorities that used armed forces against them and set battalions of extremists on those who disagreed with the policy of the so-called “government of winners”. This is doubly difficult when people see that the excesses by the radicals continue to go unpunished. For example, on 2 November extremists attacked people who were commemorating the victims of the Trade Union House on Kulikovo Field in Odessa. Photographs of those whom they had burnt to death 18 months ago were incinerated. Such desecration cannot go unnoticed.

At the same time, Donetsk and Luhansk are systematically going about implementing the Minsk Package of Measures in their entirety, including all aspects of constitutional reform designed to ensure peace and tranquillity for the inhabitants of Donbas and to guarantee the protection of their rights and legitimate interests. Russia is using its authority and influence to persuade Donetsk and Luhansk to pursue this course and we shall continue to do so in future.

Unfortunately, in Ukraine those who oppose the implementation of the Minsk Package of Measures in principle or try to distort its provisions still prevail. To indulge such efforts is inadmissible and highly dangerous. Certain measures taken recently by the official authorities to bring individual radical and openly criminal elements to justice is the right approach. However there is still much more to be done. We are convinced that many leading Western countries have the necessary leverage in Kyiv. This must be used so that the accords and modalities that need to be agreed on in the Minsk Contact Group are reinforced appropriately in Ukrainian legislation.

We believe that it is important to make full use of the assistance to the Minsk process provided by the Normandy format. The agreements reached in Paris on 2 October bring us nearer to our common goal. We expect the impending meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs to provide an additional impetus in this regard.

We repeat once again that the elimination of threats to stability on the line of contact is of the utmost importance. Provocation designed to delay or frustrate the still fragile political process, which is aimed in the first instance at reaching agreement on the modalities for local elections and at resolving priority economic and humanitarian issues, cannot be tolerated.

In conclusion, I should like to wish the distinguished Ambassadors Apakan and Sajdik success in their highly responsible work and assure them of our support.

Thank you for your attention.